

THE JESSE JAMES STORIES

A WEEKLY DEALING WITH THE DETECTION OF CRIME

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 31.

Price, Five Cents.



"FIRE!" "CRACK!" "BANG!" A VOLLEY FROM A HALF-DOZEN BUSINESS-LIKE SHOOTING IRONS FOLLOWED THE ORDER.—(CHAPTER CXXIX.)

These are very poor lies
There is nothing to these lies
James Boy is a better
You may think not but I know
The Great John of Sarnavian
This life is not near has had as
mine, I have shot millions of butts.
in my time.
They ~~me~~ me has the Great
and only of Sarnavian.

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No. 31.

NEW YORK, December 7, 1901.

Price Five Cents.

Jesse James' Exploits.

By W. B. LAWSON.

CHAPTER CXXIX.

A RICH PRIZE.

"Aim low, boys! We don't want to kill the lunk-heads! One! two! three! Fire!

Crack!

Bang!

A volley from half-a-dozen businesslike shooting-irons followed the order, and then a man wearing a black mask over his face dropped from the back of a handsome Arabian thoroughbred, and dashed like a cyclone through a clump of bushes.

"Once more! Let 'em have it, boys!" he shouted, as he emerged into a clearing on the other side of the bushes and found himself almost on top of a mule team surrounded by a crowd of badly-injured guardsmen.

The scene was not an unusual one in the annals of history.

Mule teams laden with precious metals from the various mines in the West were frequently "held up" by bandits in this way, and in a second the armed

men who were guarding the treasure were on the defensive.

Curses rolled out plentifully after the first surprise; then shrieks and groans showed that the volley had been effective.

The crashing of the bandit through the bushes and a second volley following caused utter consternation in the ranks of the guardsmen.

The daring hillside ruffian, or "road agent," as they were usually called, was before them, giving orders to his men with a veteran's coolness.

Once more the band of ambushed men snapped the triggers of their weapons, and a howl of terror from the bewildered men followed.

"It's robbers, boys! There's an army of 'em behind the bushes!" shouted some one. Then he happened to catch sight of the masked man who had just evaded the last clump of chaparral.

"By the eternal! it's Jesse James! Blaze away!" he shouted, and the crack of a weapon followed.

The man with the black mask leaped aside, and

as a bullet whistled past his ear, he raised his weapon and emptied it at short range.

Four men out of the six who remained standing after the second volley from the bushes, dropped in their tracks beside the mule team.

When his weapons were empty the fellow, who was none other than Jesse James, the terror of the whole country, fairly leaped over the fallen guards and planted his fists under the ears of the last protectors of the mule team.

A crash in the bushes followed, and five members of the famous James gang of bandits reined up in the path, Frank James, the brother of Jesse, leading the thoroughbred by the bridle.

"Leave them just as they are, boys! I've got no grudge against the fools," ordered Jesse James, as he picked up one of the long whips. "Get ahead there, Frank, and see if the way is clear! We'll drive this gold to 'Frisco ourselves, or as near there as is safe—which will be to my cave, I reckon!"

"Better change togs with these fellows, then, Jesse!" suggested Frank James. "There's a dozen of the rascals, so we'll have our pick of garments!"

"A good idea!" laughed the outlaw, stooping and jerking a coat from the back of one of the injured men.

"You'll pay up for this, you cur!" snarled the man. "The governor is hot on your heels, Jesse James! In spite of my wound, I'll live to see you in prison!"

"Ha! ha! ha! That's a sight no man will ever see!" roared the outlaw, as he completed his change of costume. "I reckon I ought to close your mouth, my friend, but, as I've got what I want, I'll spare you this time! By-by! Hope you get back to Carson all right. The walking is good. Well, boys, a good morning's work, I'm thinking!"

He cracked the whip as he spoke and the mules started on slowly.

The five members of his gang had followed his example and exchanged clothes with the injured guards, and they had also robbed them of their weapons and ammunition.

Getting back into their saddles, they followed the

mule team at a walk, riding backward, so as to watch the vanquished guard as long as possible.

"Reckon thar ain't none of 'em bad off! We winged 'em an' thet thar's all! I 'low they'll find it a long ways back to Carson City," laughed one of the bandits, heartlessly.

"Jess is er thoroughbred an' no mistake! I reckon now he's made ther haul of his life," remarked a red-whiskered fellow, who carried a Winchester on his shoulder.

The men glanced at the team ahead, and then, as the group of injured men was hidden by a bend in the road, they all swung gracefully around in their saddles.

"It's nuggets and gold dust mostly, I reckon," said Coyote Bill, one of the outlaw's best men. "It's consigned ter Washington by ther Wells, Fargo from 'Frisco. I 'low it'll make er shorter journey than thet thar! Snakes! I kin feel ther stuff in my pocket already! I hope Jess don't come ter no grief, pardners!"

"Bah! what kin happen, I'd like ter know! Yer er croaker from way back, Bill! I reckon now we won't see hide nor hair of nuthin on two legs 'twixt here and Placerville, an' ef ther sheriff of Eldorado don't get arter us thar's er clean sweep ter Sacramento."

"Jess'll steer clear of Sacramento, I reckon! Thar's them thar thet's got their eyes peeled fer a feller erbout his size," chuckled Coyote Bill, as he took a chew of tobacco.

"Jess'll dodge Sacramento, all right! He warn't born yesterday, I reckon!"

"Hi, there! Get a move on, Donk Perkins!" called out Jesse James, at that minute. "Get aboard of the cart there and do the drivin', while I take a canter ahead and look over the country."

He tossed the whip across the loaded cart as he spoke, and, giving the bridle of his horse to a companion, Donk Perkins, the red-whiskered bandit, leaped aboard of the mule team.

"Now, fellows, keep your eyes peeled!" commanded Jesse James, sternly. "There don't look to

be any trouble ahead, but you can't always tell, and I've been in this biz long enough not to be caught napping!"

"I reckon you're right, as usual, cap'n!" muttered Donk Perkins; "tho' I 'low thar ain't likely ter be nothin' in this hyar section but rocks an' bushes! Goshermighty! this hyar cart bumps round like a cork on ther ocean! Reckon I'll never be in shape erg'in ter set er saddle!"

Jesse James touched his magnificent horse and galloped ahead, leaving the driver of the mule team still growling his dissatisfaction.

Before them towered the peaks of the mountain range just over the Nevada border, and the outlaw was anxious to get into California before the sheriff of Dayton County should hear of his exploit and get after him with a posse.

"After 'laying' for this haul for a week it won't do to let it slip through our fingers," he said to his brother, in passing. "Once over the border, I'll feel safer! The fellows back yonder can't communicate with any one for two days, at least!"

"Then we have nothing to fear," broke in Frank, spurring his own magnificent animal to keep pace with his brother.

"I'm not so sure! Look out, there!" yelled the outlaw king, as he nearly jerked his horse to its haunches, and then pointed straight before them to a clump of bushes.

"Hello! A dead man, as true as bullets!" gasped Frank James, in surprise.

"And a stranger in this section, mark my words!" cried Jesse James, as he sat erect and swept a glance over the bushes.

"I'm not so sure about his being dead," he continued, after a minute; "look at his fingers, Frank! The grip on that pop ain't natural!"

"I'll look out for that!" said Frank James, drawing a pistol from his belt and putting his finger on the trigger.

Jesse James dropped from his saddle and advanced rapidly toward the man, who lay face down under the bunch of birches.

"Looks like a tenderfoot, don't he, Jess? What the deuce is he doing out here?" began Frank, as Jesse rolled the fellow over.

A volley of curses from the outlaw followed the question. Then Jesse James deliberately fired three shots into the prostrate body.

"Curse the whelp! He was dead, all right!" he said. Then, shifting his weapon to his left hand, he began to search the dead man's pockets.

"Who the devil is he, Jess?" asked Frank, coming nearer.

Jesse James held up a package of papers, shaking them as a terrier would shake a rat, before he replied:

"He was our enemy, Frank! Curse him! he was in luck to die before I saw him! Now, where the deuce did he get that document?" was the furious answer.

"He's a Pinkerton detective!" remarked Frank James, gravely.

He turned his horse's head as he spoke, and started back to warn the others.

"Hold on, there!" yelled Jesse James; "come and take a look at him, Frank! This paper shows that he's a sleuth, but I can't quite make out his features!"

He jerked the dead man to a sitting posture as he spoke, and pushed a slouch hat back from his forehead.

Frank James wheeled around and came back at a canter, and, at the first good look at the fellow, he gave a whistle of amazement.

"Confusion! it's one of our own gang, Jess! The fellow is that half-breed cowpuncher that you fell in with back in Arizona!"

Jesse James took another look, and his brow grew dark as a thundercloud.

"You're right, Frank. Strange I didn't recognize the fellow," he said, slowly.

"He's met with foul play," began Frank.

"And he was to join me to-morrow at the Pallado Pass. I reckoned he was coming from Dayton, so I

never thought of the fellow," went on Jesse, reflectively.

The mule team was up with them now, and the rest of the gang took a look at the body, Coyote Bill making an important discovery.

"Them togs was brought from east of ther Rockies, cap'n," he said, decidedly. "I 'low ther chap was held up an' murdered by detectives an' ther curs hev played ther same trick as we did! My advice right hyar is ter keep yer eye peeled fer one er ther James gang! We'll meet him somewheres 'twixt hyar an' ther border!"

Jesse James ground his teeth, but he took the advice, and, remounting his horse, he cocked both pistols.

"We'll be ready for him, I reckon," he growled, as the cavalcade moved on.

Detectives were Jesse James' natural enemies, and he took pleasure in killing them.

Many a brave Pinkerton man had found death at his hands, and all because they had tried to do their country a service.

Jesse James was the terror of the whole civilized world, and his evil deeds were so numerous that the government had offered a reward for his head.

It meant ten thousand dollars to his captor, whether he was caught dead or living.

This thought was in the outlaw's mind as he rode on ahead of the mule team, for, now that he had just stolen such a large sum, he was more dangerous than ever.

"They're after us, Frank," he said. "The whelps are after my life and yours! Bring the boys in a group here. I want them to renew their oath of allegiance! They must swear that, once in the James gang, they will always be true to it! They must swear to protect my life with their own. Aye! they must swear unswerving loyalty to me, their leader!"

This bombastic demand was greeted in silence; but, as the men advanced at Frank's gesture, there were furtive glances cast at each other.

Then Coyote Bill astonished the rest somewhat by

throwing away his quid of tobacco and remarking, dryly:

"You'll find us loyal an' true jest so long's yer squar' with us, cap'n, I reckon. Ther first sign o' trickery in ther divvy will make us yer enemies, Jess, an' arter thet thar I reckon I wouldn't give much fer er outlaw's honor!"

CHAPTER CXXX.

SURROUNDED—A SURPRISE—THE MYSTERIOUS GIRL.

Jesse James was a little staggered by these words, but he tried not to show it.

It was his way to assume indifference whenever threats against his safety were uttered.

"Who says I'm not square on the divvy?" he asked, as he faced his men, with one finger on the hammer of his weapon.

"We ain't sayin' yer ain't been squar' with us, Jess," said Coyote Bill, grimly. "I've got all that was comin' ter me an' so hev ther others, but thet thar ain't sayin' we ain't heerd things an' seen things, an' them words of mine is intended fer er warnin'!"

"Then, by thunder! I'll teach you a lesson right here!" roared the outlaw. "I'll show you how Jesse James treats mutinies among his followers! You're looking for trouble, Bill Watson, and, by the eternals! you shall have it!"

The outlaw dropped from his horse as he spoke and strode towards Coyote Bill with his pistol elevated and ready to be discharged at any second.

"Hold on, Jess! You can't afford to have a row at this stage of the game!" began Frank James, who was far more peaceable than his brother.

Coyote Bill had been indulging in the contents of his pocket flask pretty freely during the morning, and he was in a mood to resent his leader's arbitrariness.

As he, too, slid from his saddle, there was an ominous silence, for Jesse James had not given him an opportunity to draw a weapon.

"You're a fool, Bill," remarked Donk Perkins, who had brought the mules to a standstill.

"I reckon Bill is drunk, Jess! Yer mout make some allowance," suggested Hank Watson, who was acting as rear guard for the treasure wagon.

Coyote Bill had squared himself in the middle of the road just ahead of the leaders, and now turned his head, with a scornful gesture.

"Reckon I kin erbout take keer of myself. Don't yer go ter botherin' erbout me, pardners!" he said, grimly.

Then he faced Jesse James again in a determined manner.

At this exciting moment the bushes twenty feet from the roadway were parted a little and two pairs of eyes looked on at the scene with great interest.

"One! two! three! Let her go, Star! You shoot the rear mules and I'll kill the leaders!"

The words were whispered softly by one of the men lurking in the bushes, and, at the same instant, four reports sounded almost simultaneously.

The four mules dropped dead in their tracks, and, as the gang of outlaws raised their revolvers to answer the volley, four more shots were fired at them from another direction.

Then there came a yell that resembled an Indian war whoop, and the bushes on both sides of the road seemed to tremble with excitement.

A score or more of men, wearing feathers in their hair and gaudy blankets around their shoulders, sprang up like magic.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Their revolvers spoke promptly, and four of the outlaw horses dropped dead in their tracks.

Jesse James had mounted his horse on hearing the first shot fired, and he and his brother were now the only two left in the saddle.

But the sight they beheld astounded the outlaws. They had thought themselves surrounded by enemies. Instead of that, most of the firing had been done by another outlaw gang.

"By thunder!" whispered one of the Pinkerton men, "it's another cutthroat gang! We must bolt for it," and the two detectives who had killed the mules darted back through the thick bushes as noiselessly as serpents.

Jesse James recovered himself instantly, especially as he saw that none of his men were injured, and another quick glance told him who were his assailants.

"Whoop! Hi there! What the devil is the matter, Bill Pierce?" he roared. "Don't you know a friend when you see him? Put up your pops, boys! You're as welcome as bullets in war time. Where the deuce did those shots that killed the mules come from?"

"Exactly what I want to know, Jess!" answered the leader of the bogus savages, in excellent English. "I heard the shots and thought the mule train had been attacked, and, of course, I wasn't going to see the boodle grabbed right from under my nose! Now I see you're ahead of me and I've got to lick you if I want the dough! Ha! ha! A tough job, I'm bettin'!"

The newcomer straightened himself up as he spoke, and glanced at the little outlaw band admiringly.

His own men, eight in number, were mostly half-breeds from the Northwest, and, as they had been tramping through the mountains for weeks, they were in poor shape for fighting.

"I reckon you'd meet your match, Bill Price," chuckled Jesse James, a trifle uneasily. "We're as fresh as two-year-olds, and there's something on the cart yonder worth fighting for! I reckon your men shot the mules without thinking exactly what the consequences would be, didn't they, pardner?"

The question was accompanied by a steely gleam of the eyes, and, as Bill Price (the leader of the most dastardly band of stage robbers in the Northwest) caught the ominous glint, he faced his own men with a commanding gesture.

Instantly the eight men formed themselves in a

semi-circle around him, while the outlaws moved nearer to the cart that held the treasure.

"On your mother's grave, men! did any one of you turn a pistol on yonder mules?" asked Price, solemnly.

A slow shaking of heads followed, and the men folded their brawny arms reverently across their bosoms.

Jesse James studied the painted faces, and an uglier frown deepened upon his forehead.

"Then we have other enemies near! Search the bushes, Bill Watson!" he ordered, angrily. "Bring out the serpents, you whelp, or your head will pay the forfeit! You're a snake in the grass yourself, so you should trace your kind easily!"

Coyote Bill's red face grew gray with rage, but he turned obediently and darted into the bushes.

At a look from his brother, Frank James had lined the balance of the men up between the mule cart and the bogus red men, and they now stood, each with his hand on the butt of a revolver.

"I was sure I saw tracks back yonder, Jess," went on Bill Price, who had just treated himself to a drink from his flask and put it back in his pocket.

Jesse James drew out his own black bottle and swallowed a mouthful of whisky, returning the flask to his pocket without extending it to his rivals.

The men on both sides looked on solemnly at this ominous sign, for the absence of conviviality showed the presence of suspicion.

A yell from Coyote Bill came in time to relieve the depression, and then the fellow shouted a warning to Jesse from the bushes.

"There's tracks, all right, cap'n! Two men with cowhides on have just crossed beyond the bunch of alders and made for the brook yonder. Hello! here's a knife ther rascal has dropped! Shall I bring it to yer, Jesse, or go on arter ther skulkers?"

"Bring me the knife!" roared the outlaw, without moving.

Coyote Bill came back through the bushes and handed him the knife, and, as Jesse James took it in his hand, his bronzed face grew purple.

For just a second he forgot his dangerous position and burst out into invectives against the inoffensive-looking implement.

"That's the property of Will Star, a Pinkerton man!" he roared. "I've seen the thing before a dozen times, I might say. That means that the rascal is on my track! He shot the mules, and then skulked into the bushes, and he'll be back before long with the sheriff, most likely!"

"Then you'd better be moving, Jesse!" said Bill Price, with a peculiar ring in his voice.

"How the devil can I, when the mules are dead?" asked the outlaw, excitedly.

"Hitch the men into the gearing and let 'em drag it," suggested Price, coolly. "It's the only way it can be done, and we'll make it right on the divvy!"

Jesse James ground his teeth savagely, but he saw not other way to save the treasure.

He did not dare to send a man on the track of the detectives for fear of treachery in the Price gang finding him short-handed.

"I'll accept that proposition on one condition, Bill Price," he said, after a minute. "Disarm the men, every mother's-son of them! You and I will keep a pop in one hand and the rest of the weapons shall lie on top of the nuggets where they can be got at handy, if there's need to use 'em!"

"Agreed!" said Price, promptly, as he proceeded to disarm his men and take possession of the horse that Frank James had been riding.

Jesse James winked at Frank, and his brother understood at once what was wanted.

As he made a show at disarming the others and laying his own weapons also upon the bags of nuggets, he quietly slipped a loaded weapon into his outside pocket.

What Jesse James saw, his brother did not notice—that one of Price's men did the same thing.

Then the men hitched themselves to the wagon, and the strange cavalcade started.

Jesse James and Bill Price galloped on ahead, each carrying a cocked revolver, and each eyeing the other furtively for any sign of treachery.

The two outlaws had met before and bore each other no ill-feeling, but both knew the other well enough not to be over trustful.

With such a prize between them the question of honor would hardly be considered.

One knew as well as the other that in the end one would come off victorious.

Which it would be, under the circumstances, neither could tell, but each thought that he held the winning hand when he secreted the extra pistol.

"Once over the border, the stuff will be pretty safe, I reckon, Jess," remarked Price, pleasantly, "and we'll be in California by midnight, if the men don't give out! There's bad going on the other side of the hills——"

"I ain't going that way, Bill," spoke up Jesse James, promptly. "I've changed my mind since I met you, pardner! There's a place just beyond the Roaring Gulch that'll do to stop in over night! It'll suit you, I reckon, if you're so anxious for a divvy!"

"I ain't in no hurry, Jess!" remarked Price, with a sidelong look. "I 'low, though, it would be a heap safer all around if we were out of the country!"

"I could defy the whole country where I'm going," said the outlaw, sullenly. "If there's got to be a divvy, it might as well be soon as late, and, between you and me, Price, I ain't over anxious for your company! That's plain talk, but you've got the same privilege, pardner! I reckoned on getting that whole swag behind there, and I ain't stuck on the notion of a divvy!"

"It's a fair and square deal, Jess! If you hadn't corraled ther mule team I'd have had it a little later! 'Twarn't my fault the mules were killed! I'm helping you out of your hole, pardner, and you ain't got grace to see it!"

"I reckon I ain't," began Jesse, gloomily, when a yell from the mule team behind cut short the sentence.

The two leaders had gone ahead until they were out of sight of the human beasts of burden, and, as they galloped back into full view, a strange spectacle greeted them.

A young girl of surpassing beauty was standing in the middle of the road. She had her right hand held up warningly, as though defying the men to pass her.

Where she had come from was a mystery.

The men were staring at her as though she was a spectre, and, in truth, she was the last object they had thought to meet upon their desolate journey through the Nevada hills.

CHAPTER CXXXI.

THE DETECTIVE'S WIFE.

Even with this extraordinary sight before him, Jesse James did not forget his caution.

He had not passed a human habitation in nearly four days, so the presence of this girl in the wilderness was a great surprise, but he insisted upon Price keeping pace with him as he rode up to her.

"Hello! who the deuce are you?" began Price, as they reached her.

Jesse James cut short his remarks by lifting his wide-brimmed hat gracefully and saluting the young girl as though she were the Queen of England.

"What can I do for you, miss? Are you lost, strayed or stolen? You have only to command and both I and my men will obey you!"

The grandiloquent words of the outlaw so astonished the young girl that she promptly turned her back on the others and stood staring up at him.

He took a quick look at his men as he spoke, and seeing that Frank had one hand trust carelessly into his coat pocket, the outlaw slid from his horse and strode up to the girl.

"Who are you and where did you come from?" he began. "Don't be afraid! There ain't one in the bunch that would dare raise a finger to harm you!"

The young girl, whose face had been half-concealed by a big handkerchief, knotted loosely under her chin, pushed the golden locks from her forehead and looked at him shyly.

"Who are you, sir?" she asked, after a minute's scrutiny of his face.

The answer came promptly and in a tone of pride.

"I am Jesse James, the outlaw—the enemy of all men and the friend of all women!"

This answer was exactly what the young woman wanted, and a shrewd look crept into her blue eyes, as she answered:

"Then, Jesse James, you must take me back to my friends! They are resting in the Black Ravine yonder. I was stolen from them early this morning by a fiend that I now believe to be one of your number!"

"A likely story, when we've just come from the other direction!" growled one of the men.

"I reckon it was Snipe Wilson, ther corpse back yonder," said Coyote Bill. "He'd steal er gal as quick as he would a bag o' nuggets!"

"Who stole you? Describe him," Jesse said, shortly.

"A man with a black face and cruel eyes! He wore a white sombrero and carried a Winchester! I was saved from him by a stray shot from somewhere, I know not where, and I have walked thus far, hoping to find my way back to the wagon!"

The men looked at each other, and then Frank James made a brief summary.

"The fellow back there under the trees must have stole her and the detectives shot him. Now, then, make her account for the fellow's clothes, and tell where the horse went to! Her story sounds fishy, Jesse, in spite of her looking so innocent."

Jesse James scrutinized the girl's face while his brother was talking, but her expression was as innocent as any baby's.

"We had just dismounted under the trees and—the brute was trying to kiss me," murmured the girl, faintly. "When the shot came the horse bolted and I ran as fast as I could! I did not look behind me, so I knew not what happened!"

There was another keen glance passed between the outlaws, and then Price gave vent to an opinion.

"The girl may be speaking truth, and she may be lyin', Jess! The best way is to send her where she wants to go, with one of the boys to escort her! If

he don't come back it won't be much loss, and if he does join us again, so much the better!"

"It will be one of your men, of course, seeing you are nine to six," answered the outlaw, shrewdly.

Price bit his lips, and the men laughed again; then Frank James discovered a solution to the problem.

"S'pose we take her along to the gully! We can settle about the swag and 'tend to her case afterward. The ravine aint' more than nine miles from the gully."

"A good scheme, Frank! Here, Bill Watson, take the gal with you!" ordered Jesse James, promptly.

"Oh, no! Never!" gasped the girl, as she took a look at Coyote Bill's features. "I am afraid of him, sir!"

"You'll have to take her with you, Jess!" chuckled Bill Price, delightedly.

"I reckon, now, I'm not taking on any handicap like that," remarked the outlaw, grimly. "She can go with Bill or ride on top of the nuggets."

The outlaw spoke decidedly, but the girl astonished him by asking boldly:

"Why can't I ride with you, Jesse James, if you are good to women?"

There was a gleam of fun in Price's eyes, but it departed as the outlaw answered:

"We are two rival gangs of robbers, with a prize between us, miss! There's going to be bloodshed before long, and I want my legs and arms unfettered. You'll be safer on the wagon, but don't you meddle with the weapons!"

The girl glanced back over her shoulder at the array of revolvers and Winchesters which had converted the cart into a moving arsenal, and her red lips tightened with a sudden resolution.

Mounting the cart like a cat, she seated herself upon the bags of gold dust, where the array of weapons would be in front of her and within the easy reach of her fingers.

Jesse James administered another warning regarding the touching of the weapons, and the men

rigged themselves up in the harness and started the vehicle moving.

Frank James and Arapahoe Joe, one of Price's men, brought up the rear, each carrying, unknown to the other, a hidden revolver.

"Now, then, Jesse James, your day has come!" whispered the young girl to herself, as she glanced over the heads of the human brutes before her to the dashing outlaw.

Her eyes glistened, as she ran her eagle glance over the weapons and selected a fine Colt revolver, with every chamber loaded, as the one to use in an emergency.

The two outlaws had galloped on, and were out of sight of the party almost before she had made her selection, and with the instinct of caution she glanced back over her shoulder.

Frank James had his eyes riveted upon her face, and for just a second he startled her.

He was so much like his brother that she knew him instantly.

"He shall die, too," she thought, as her lids wavered a little. "Oh, I am glad I am the wife of a brave detective! It is my duty to kill these fiends, and I shall do my duty!"

Her feelings overpowered her to such an extent that she leaned forward a little, and a sudden jolt of the cart brought her fingers almost to the butt of the handsome weapon.

"Touch it at your peril, miss!" warned Frank James, sharply.

The others turned and looked at him with grins on their faces, and one of them called out across the wagon:

"I reckon we'd cash in all fired swift, ef ther gal knew her power! Jess an' Bill air a brace of fools between you an' me, pardners! What's ter hinder us, I'd like ter know, from gettin' hold of them thar weapons?"

"What's the use in it, men! We're peaceable, ain't we?" spoke up Frank James, quickly. "We're friends till the divvy, an' the pops are so much more to carry!"

"That's right, pard, but s'pose we'd be fired on from ther bresh? We'd be er lot er easy targets fer skulkers, I'm thinkin'!"

"Thet thar's what the cap'ns air ahead fer," said Arapahoe Joe, sullenly. "Let ther guns alone, boys! They'll only make trouble! Ef ther gal dares ter lay er finger on one on 'em I'll blow her ter blazes!"

The half-breed grew excited as he spoke, and drew the hidden revolver from his pocket.

Crack!

A bullet sped from Frank James' coat pocket, and Arapahoe Joe dropped like a log at the tail of the treasure cart.

For just a second the men were paralyzed over this revelation; then, with a yell, they dropped their gearing and made a dash for the wagon.

Flash!

Crack!

Bang!

The handsome weapon in Frank James' hand spoke rapidly, and three bullets whistled over the young girls' head, as she bent like a flash and captured the Colt revolver.

"Back! Touch a weapon and you are dead men!" roared Frank James, and three more of the bogus red men staggered back with bullets in their bodies.

At that second the four members of the James gang attempted to snatch weapons, but were frustrated in their design in a surprising manner.

The trigger of the Colt revolver was snapped under their noses, and a feminine voice uttered a word of caution.

"Halt! Touch them if you dare! Your enemies are wounded, all but one! The first man of you that touches a weapon will get a bullet through him!"

The young girl was kneeling on the gold bags, covering the weapons with her dress, and her eyes flashed like diamonds, as she flourished the big weapon.

Frank James had been attacked by the only uninjured member of the Price crew, and was fighting for his life, so, for a moment, the young girl was master of the situation.

Jesse James and Bill Price came galloping back at that minute, both with smiles upon their faces, that changed to wonder when they saw what had happened.

At the very first shot Jesse had taken it for granted that Frank was monarch of all he surveyed, while Bill Price supposed Arapahoe Joe was in the same position. They were both dumbfounded to find Frank James and a half-breed in a desperate hand-to-hand encounter, and the young girl holding the balance of the cutthroats at bay with a Colt revolver.

"Treachery, by the eternal!" howled Price, as he saw that his men had gotten the worst of it.

"By thunder! That gal is plucky! Thinks she's got to fight, and don't know friends from enemies!" was the outlaw's first thought.

Then, as quick as a flash, he raised his pistol and a bullet struck his rival's wrist, just as he was pulling the trigger of his weapon. Another shot followed, and Price was left as good as armless; then Jesse James took careful aim at his brother's opponent.

The half-breed went down in a heap, and Jesse James was once more in possession of the treasure.

His only antagonist now was the girl with the flashing eyes, who had by this time become calm enough to relish her position.

"Now, Jesse James, you have to deal with me!" she called out, coolly. "First, give those men what aid you can! This is the time for humanity, and not for more bullets!"

The great outlaw glanced at the determined face, and, once more raising his hat, he lifted his weapon.

"You shall give the orders, and my men shall obey them, blue eyes," he said, gallantly, "but let me warn you not to touch the hammer of your weapon! Such a move on your part would make me forget that you are a woman, and I'd be forced to send you to the happy hunting ground!"

The words were said pleasantly, but a cruel look accompanied them, and the young girl felt the strength rapidly oozing from her finger tips. Not one of the other ruffians had impressed her with such

power, but she realized that now she was under the eye of a master.

If she had dared to disobey him her strength would not have permitted it, and, while he still smiled so cruelly upon her, the weapon dropped from her fingers.

Five minutes later the two horses had been fastened into the cart, and the James gang, armed and jubilant, was once more journeying across the mountains.

The last glimpse of the spot upon which the tragedy had occurred showed Bill Price and his men shaking their fists after the victorious outlaw, as they bent over each other, applying rude bandages to their injuries.

The young girl sat in a disconsolate heap upon the bags of gold, and, as she was jolted along, the tears crept from under her lashes.

With all her golden opportunity, she had not succeeded in killing Jesse James, but this was not the most serious of her troubles.

She was the wife of Will Star, the Pinkerton detective, who had sworn to kill Jesse James, and her appearance in the road was part of a clever ruse to lead the outlaw gang in another direction.

Mrs. Star had no fear that Jesse James would harm her, but her husband had laid a trap for the outlaw in the ravine, and he was still headed for the gully.

It was the thought that she had not been able to accomplish anything that had overcome the little woman.

Long before Jesse James led the little party into the gully, she had regained her composure and decided to pit her wits against those of the famous bandit.

She had taken the vow to kill this man, and she would not give up without another effort.

There was no possibility of getting her hands upon another weapon now, for the men watched her every movement.

Jesse James led his party to a small house, built of solid stone, which was so surrounded with bushes

that the men could not drag the cart within a hundred yards of it.

Taking the first bag of gold upon the saddle before him, Jesse James ordered his men to follow, and in ten minutes the bags were deposited under the floor of the stone house. Then the outlaw came back to where he had left Mrs. Star, still seated upon the cart.

"What are you going to do with me, Jesse James?" asked the little woman, bravely.

The outlaw slipped from his saddle, and threw the bridle over his arm; then took a quick look back over his shoulder to see if any of his men were watching him.

Frank James was coming toward them, but that did not matter.

"Ha! Ha! Getting frightened, aren't you, little woman?" laughed the outlaw, gaily. "Well, I may as well be honest with you! I'm going to put my arm around you first, and then I am going to kiss you!"

CHAPTER CXXXII.

THE OLD STONE HOUSE.

"For shame, Jess! Let the girl alone!" called Frank James, as Mrs. Star uttered a cry of horror.

"Shut your mouth, will you!" growled Jesse James, glancing back over his shoulder.

Instantly a small, plump hand gave him a stinging blow upon the cheek, and Mrs. Star sprang to her feet, with her eyes sparkling.

"By Jove! The girl is a beauty!" laughed the outlaw, who did not in the least mind the slap.

"Don't you dare to touch me, you monster! I am a married woman, and my husband will kill you!" blurted out the indignant woman, impulsively.

Jesse James stared at her for a minute, and as she watched his face the detective's wife saw almost instantly that she had aroused his suspicions.

She bit her lips and colored with chagrin, and every change in her expression seemed to increase the outlaw's anger.

"By the eternal! I know her now, Frank!" he snapped, after a minute; then he threw back his head in a burst of hilarious laughter. Frank James hurried up to them, and stared into her face, and a minute later the rest of the gang surrounded them.

"Take a good look at her, men!" thundered Jesse James, pointing his revolver at the frightened woman. "Her face is familiar! See if you can place it!"

A brief silence followed, and then Coyote Bill made an announcement.

"I reckon yer right, Jess! I've seen her afore! 'Pears ter me she crossed our path way back in Colorado."

"Later'n thet thar, pardner! I've seen the gal sence we come ter Nevada," said Donk Perkins, decidedly.

Jesse James helped himself to another swallow of whisky before he delivered his opinion.

When he finally spoke poor Mrs. Star had all she could do to keep from fainting.

"The gal is the wife of one of them Pinkerton sleuths," he said firmly, "so that proves that the whelps are hot on my trail! Bring the gal inside, Frank, and you, Bill Watson, drag in the wagon! Forewarned is forearmed, you know, and this gal is a warning, I take it!"

The outlaw cocked his revolver, as he spoke, and then glanced carefully over the bushes, as though he expected to see a detective pop up any minute.

Then, walking backwards, he made his way to the house, while the men pulled the empty cart across the bushes and hid it in the rear of the low stone building.

Frank led Mrs. Star into the house. Mrs. Samuels, Jesse James' mother, was there, and in a few moments the whole gang had gathered inside.

As it proved, they were none too soon.

Suddenly a chorus of shouts from outside came to them

"Whoop! Hello, inside, there!" yelled some one at the door; then came a loud knocking with a revolver butt on the heavy panels.

Jesse James made a sign to his mother to answer the question.

The aged woman moved across the room, and stood beside the door as she answered:

"Who are you, stranger, and what do you want?"

The answer made Jesse James open his eyes a bit wider, while Mrs. Star held her breath and clasped her hands together.

"We won't harm er hair of yer head, madam! We's jest er party bound fer Austin from near Frisco, an' we've hed ther misfortune ter lose one of our number!"

Mrs. Star got her breath and opened her lips to call out, when Jesse James promptly clapped his hand over her mouth.

"Who's yer lost, and how?" asked Mrs. Samuels, who had not heard their prisoner's story.

Mrs. Star's heart seemed to stop beating, when her own husband replied in a husky voice:

"We've lost er gal, madam! She went berryin' in ther hills, an' thet thar's ther last we've seen of her!"

"How many are there of you?" asked Mrs. Samuel's through the door.

"Three men an' two women all told—the gal thet's missin' would make ther number even!"

"Let 'em in, mother!" said Frank James, straightening up suddenly. "That's the same story the gal told, and I believe it's the truth!"

Jesse James whipped a big handkerchief from his pocket, and tied it over Mrs. Star's mouth while Frank was speaking; then, securing another, he bound her hands together.

"Now, then, I'm ready for 'em!" he growled, as he cocked two pistols and stood with one in each hand facing the door.

Without a word, the rest of the gang formed a half-circle around him, while Mrs. Samuels removed the bar and uttered a word of welcome.

"I reckon you can come in, strangers, if you like!" she said, quickly. "The gal is here all right, and I 'low she'll be glad to see you!"

CHAPTER CXXXIII.

THE PRAIRIE SCHOONER.

Mrs. Star exerted all her strength to free her mouth from the gag. It was of no avail.

Jesse James had bound it too tightly for her to move it an atom.

It was horrible to be obliged to see those she loved shot down in cold blood, without being able to give them a word of warning.

As the door swung open her eyes were riveted upon it with an awful fascination.

But, to her surprise, the person who stood before the door was not her husband.

Neither did he belong to the party to which she and her husband had referred, but was unmistakably a stranger in that section.

"So you've found the gal, hev ye? Waal, thet thar's good news," he began, when his eye fell upon Jesse James, and his group of marksmen. There was a moment's pause, as the stranger stared incredulously; then he threw his head back, and burst into a roar of laughter.

"By snakes! Ef it ain't Jesse James himself! Snakes an' crocodiles! I 'low I never expected ter hev sech an honor! I reckon, now, you'll lower them guns a leetle, pard, when I tell ye my name! Why, I'm ther only man twixt hyar an' ther Pacific thet's got anything about him wuth stealin'!"

It was the bandit's turn to stare, but he did not take the stranger's advice to lower his weapon.

"You'd best speak your name before you come in, then, stranger," he said, glumly. "I don't know your face, and neither is your voice just familiar!"

"I'll leave my shootin' hardware outside. Reckon, now, that thar'll be erbout ter yer likin', Jess," remarked the stranger, as by a quick motion, he unbuckled his belt and allowed it and two pistols to drop to the ground.

Jesse James lowered his weapon a trifle, and gave a low order to his men; then he rose from his chair and held out his hand to the stranger.

"You're welcome, stranger, particularly if its true

you've got that about you that's worth stealing! Now, where did the rest of your party go to?"

The stranger jerked his slouch hat off with one hand, while he made a gesture over his shoulder with the other.

"They're yonder—ther whole bunch on 'em, Jess!" he said, cheerfully. "Ther disappearance of ther gal in broad daylight has unmanned 'em er leetle! Hello! What ther devil is ther meanin' of this? What hev yer got the leetle one gagged fer, yer scoundrel?"

He had just caught sight of Mrs. Star, who was staring at him over the big bandana, but Jesse James walked to the door without answering his question.

"Hands off, stranger! She's our prisoner at present!" warned Frank James, as the newcomer was about to remove the gag without ceremony.

"Then yer a gang of brutes, instead o' men!" retorted the stranger, promptly. "What's the gal done, I'd like ter know! Hang it, Jess! I've heerd yer had er heart in thet thar bullet-proof carcass of yourn! Let ther gal loose this minute, or, by ther eternal, I'll bring the old house about yer ears! I will that!"

He shook his fist under Frank's nose as he spoke, without apparently noticing that the outlaw was holding a cocked revolver; then he walked over to Jess.

"Hyar, yer infernal scoundrel! Hyars five hundred in er lump! Now, then, order them cutthroats of yourn ter let ther gal loose! Do it quick, Jess James!" he roared, pulling a nugget from his pocket.

"Let the gal loose, Frank!" said Jesse James, as he pocketed the nugget, without so much as turning his head. "Then go out and take a look at the old ark yonder! There's three good mules and a broncho that may be needed! Go along with him, Pete, and don't let them catch you napping!"

The two men left the room, Frank jerking off Mrs. Star's bonds as he passed her, and Jesse James watched them make their way to a covered prairie

wagon which had come to a halt a dozen rods from the stone shanty.

"Now, stranger, what's your name?" he asked, as Frank and Pete disappeared inside of the wagon.

The stranger was standing by Mrs. Star, chafing one of her hands, which was red and swollen, and took his time about answering the question.

"Reckon, you've heard of Pat Dennison, ain't ye, Jess?" he asked, slowly.

The outlaw cleared his throat with an ominous cough before he answered: "Are you Pat Dennison?"

"Naw! I'm told I look like him, tho'," remarked the stranger, blithely.

Jesse James cocked his pistol with a warning click.

"I reckon you'd best quit fooling, stranger," he began, angrily.

"Don't get wrathy, Jess! I 'low ye'd be surprised ter know I was the mayor of Sacramento, now, wouldn't ye?"

"I reckon I would, stranger."

"Haw! Haw! So would I! Tho' thet thar ain't a sayin' I ain't had similar aspirations!"

Another click followed, and Jesse James raised two weapons on a level with the stranger's heart.

"This is the last call! When I say three you'll be so full of holes you won't know yourself from a sieve, stranger," he said, slowly.

"Now, then, your name, and be quick about it. One! Two!"

"Haw! Haw! Reckon it's time ter tell ther truth an' shame ther devil! Waal, hyar goes! It's hull hog or nuthin'! I'm ther only one of my kind, an' thar won't be another like me! Hold yer breath, Jesse James, fer I'm erbout ter impart a secret! Yer behold afore yer this minute ther Honorable——"

Crack!

Jesse James' temper could stand it no longer, and a bullet sped singing from the muzzle of his revolver.

The stranger moved sharply, and the ball passed

through his clothing, inflicting a flesh wound in the neck where it joins the shoulder.

"Ther Honorable Conway Tupham!" finished the wounded man, coolly. "Ther richest man, by er long shot, thet's ter be found in Californy!"

"Why the deuce didn't you say so, and not be so long about it," snarled Jesse James, who was a little upset over this information. "I reckon you were killing time. If I'd known who you was——"

"Haw! Haw! You'd hev treated me better, I reckon! Waal, now yer know what kind of a bird has fell inter your bag, p'raps you'll do me ther favor ter be a leetle more civil."

He walked to the door as he spoke and took a look at the prairie schooner, finding no one in sight, and all quiet under the canvas.

"Queer ther bunch don't come in ter see ther gal," he muttered, apparently to himself. "I 'low they've guessed who yef be, Jess, an' ther news has skeered 'em! Twouldn't be ther case if ther gal's husband was with us! He's been searchin' ther hills steady ever sence we lost her this mornin'!"

Mrs. Star opened her eyes at this, for she had heard her husband's voice distinctly, but she breathed a sigh of relief, for she knew the lie was intended for her own and her husband's protection.

Jesse James was leaning in the doorway now, staring hard at the prairie wagon, but his men were pressing the triggers of their weapons as vigilantly as ever.

Not a movement of the "Honorable Conway Tupham" escaped them, and she did not dare to question him by so much as an arching of the eyebrows.

This friend in need was a total stranger to her.

No doubt he had overhauled her party during the forenoon and learned the ruse to lead Jesse James into a trap, which, because of Bill Price, had proven unsuccessful.

She stared at him curiously, as he chatted amiably with the men, and even tried to make friends with the grim old woman.

Suddenly the strange man made a gesture that

struck her as being familiar, and a moment later she experienced a revelation.

The man who had ventured so boldly into this outlaw den was not Conway Tupham at all.

He was another Pinkerton detective by the name of Frank Wallace.

After that the poor girl's heart beat so hard that she could hardly breathe, she was so fearful that Jesse James would discover the secret.

"It's cussed strange the boys don't come back!" broke out the outlaw, at that minute. "The fools seem to think I can wait all day! If there's nothing to be feared from yonder ark I want to know it."

"Shall I hurry 'em, Jess?" asked the bogus Tupham, with a twinkle in his shrewd eyes.

"For how much?" answered the outlaw, giving a quick look over his shoulder. The detective drew two nuggets from his pocket and balanced them on his hand.

"One if I go alone, and two if I kin take the gal with me," he said, firmly.

"The first offer is good, but I'll not consider the other," said the outlaw, attempting to take the first nugget. The detective slipped them both into his pocket and shook his head decidedly.

"You've got no claim ter ther gal, Jess! She's er poor man's wife, an' not er rich man's daughter! Yer mout keep her till kingdom come an' no one would ante up a ransom!"

"I reckon, I'll keep her just the same!" said the outlaw, sullenly; then he raised his voice and halloed across the bushes:

"Hello, there, Pete! Where the devil are you, Frank?"

There was no reply, except that one of the mules looked around inquiringly.

Then something happened that startled Jesse James.

Something was dumped out of the tail of the cart and fell to the ground, with a thud.

It looked like a roll of old carpet, but the thud was ominous.

The outlaw knew of nothing that could fall with that peculiar sound except a lifeless human body.

Before he could even yell a warning a whip was cracked over the heads of the mules and the white canvas wagon top moved away beyond the bushes.

A low laugh from his guest brought the outlaw to his senses.

He turned and saw Tupham standing directly before the three armed men, pointing down at something that lay on the stone floor of the shanty.

"Quick! Seize him, men! Bind him hand and foot, and the girl, too!" he began. "It's a trick to reduce my numbers, and it's succeeding too well for my pleasure! The rascals have killed Frank or Pete! They've left the body in the bunch of mesquite yonder!"

There was a shriek, and Mrs. Samuels dashed from the house, stopping long enough to pick up one of Tupham's pistols, which still lay where he had dropped them.

Donk Perkins made an attempt to seize Tupham, but the latter sprang back like lightning.

Tossing another nugget, worth fully a thousand dollars, to Jesse James, he put his back against the wall and glared at them savagely.

Instantly three weapons were leveled at his heart, and three pairs of eyes were turned upon the outlaw king for an order to commit murder.

If Jesse James had so much as winked, a brave life would have gone out in a second, but the bandit was feeling the gold in his hand, a cruel smile crept slowly over his features.

"Hold! Don't harm him, men! Nuggets like these don't grow on every tree!"

"If he is the man he says he is, the rascal's worth knowing! We'll leave him here with the gal, while we go after the wagon. Mother can look after the two of 'em! There ain't a shooting iron in the house, so there'll be no danger for her!"

He stepped out of the house as he spoke, and two of his men followed him. Donk Perkins went out back, and in a second returned with the thoroughbred.

Mrs. Star slipped across the floor and picked up a bit of white cambric. It was a lady's handkerchief, with the initial "L." in one corner.

No one noticed the act except the clever detective, and he promptly turned the attention of the others by saying:

"This hyar's a hard act on your part, Jess! I reckon ther gal would ruther stay alone with ther old woman, an' I could hang around outside till you come back, thet is, ef ye don't intend ter take us with yer!"

"You'll stay where you are, the two of you," roared the outlaw king; then, as his mother came back, with a solemn look upon her face, he turned to her inquiringly.

"It's Pete! There's a mark on his throat that shows they strangled him, Jess! Frank is a prisoner in the prairie schooner!"

Jesse James' face grew as black as a thundercloud as she spoke, and he brought his closed fist down with a bang upon the table.

"Maledictions upon them! They were sleuthhounds, no doubt! Ha! ha! And you're another, Mr. Conway Tupham!"

He turned upon the detective so suddenly that it almost took the clever fellow's breath away, but before he could reply there came a strange interruption. The sharp cry of a woman emanated from the rear room, and Mrs. Samuels fairly bounded through the door and into what the detective and Mrs. Star had supposed was a stable.

"So you've got another prisoner, Jess! Waal, I guessed it!" said the detective, merrily. "Cussed ef I ain't sorry now I left my pops outside! I reckoned ye'd be fa'r an' squar' when ye saw I could pay fer sech treatment!"

Jesse James was white with rage, but, as usual, his plans had been laid in the space of a minute.

"I'll deal with you later—when I've rescued my brother and sent those treacherous devils where they belong!" he said, furiously.

The sounds in the rear room had stopped sud-

denly, and Mrs. Samuels came out, taking pains to close and bolt the door behind her.

"She won't do it again, Jess!" she said, grimly. "Now, give me my orders and be off, my son! Every minute that you waste may be fatal to your brother!"

The outlaw bent his lips to her ear a minute; then left the house, the old woman being for the time sole jailor of three prisoners, as well as the custodian of fifty thousand dollars.

Neither the detective nor Mrs. Star knew what had been done with the money, and they saw at once that there was little chance for them to locate it, for Mrs. Samuels' first command was that they should not move a muscle.

Armed with two revolvers, she seated herself upon a stool, after seeing that the door was securely barred against intruders.

Jesse James ordered his three men to secrete themselves in the bushes near the house to await his return. They were not allowed to enter the house for obvious reasons.

Jesse was afraid of their turning traitor and stealing the bags of gold—they might even be tempted to murder his old mother.

As he galloped away on the back of his thoroughbred, his keen eyes caught one glimpse of the white-topped wagon.

A minute later it disappeared over the brow of a hill, and when the outlaw reached the hill it had vanished completely.

Before him swept a range of low, sparsely-wooded hills, and a wagon of that size could hardly disappear for more than five minutes.

He waited twice that time, with his brow growing darker and darker; then, following the line of broken bushes, which had been made by the passing of the clumsy vehicle, he dashed ahead in the hope of overtaking them.

Only one thought was in this strange man's mind at this time.

He was determined to save his brother.

After that had been accomplished he would turn

his attention to an even pleasanter task—that of wreaking his revenge upon the men he called "sleuthhounds."

Meanwhile, something had happened in the old stone house that would have made him even more furious if he had known it.

For once in her life, Mrs. Samuels had been outwitted.

The detective tricked her into a moment of unguardedness, and, while Jesse was planning how to wreak his revenge upon his enemies, both his mother and his ill-gotten gold were in the "sleuthhounds'" hands.

CHAPTER CXXXIV.

JESSE JAMES' TRICKS.

A sharp dash over the hills followed; then Jesse James reined up with a fierce exclamation.

He was on the top of a steep decline, and below him, not a hundred yards away, was the wreck of a canvas-topped prairie wagon.

"Deserted the old caboose and bolted! Exactly what I thought!" grumbled the outlaw, riding close to the ruins.

Hoof beats to the left told him in which direction the party had gone, but the shrewd outlaw paused to consider the situation before he followed.

Jesse was still clad in the garments which he had stolen from one of the injured guards that morning, and, as he sat his horse in the middle of the path, some one hailed him from a distance of several rods across the hills.

Looking sharply, he discovered two men, mounted upon handsome horses, who seemed to be scanning the surrounding country.

"The sheriff, by the eternal!" he muttered under his breath. "He's out looking for the mule team!"

The men had spurred their horses toward him, and were waving their hats in a friendly manner, and the outlaw was not slow in grasping the situation.

"They think I'm one of those link-heads that was

sent with the yaller from the Comstock, I reckon," he said, aloud. "What's the matter with my keeping up the bluff and 'lowing I'm one of 'em? That's my play at the present minute, I reckon."

As the sheriff yelled again the outlaw promptly took off his hat and swung it around his head.

"Hi, there! Hello, sheriff! I reckon, now, yer ther man I want ter see!" he bellowed. "Hev ye got er drop of licker in yer pocket? I've hed er thump on ther head thet makes me feel like er sick coyote!"

"What's up, pardner? What yer doin' hyar? Anything happened to ther yaller?" asked the sheriff, showing by his remark that he had heard nothing of the occurrence.

"I reckon now thar has," growled the outlaw, as he accepted a black bottle. "We was held up by Jess James at ther Broncho Hills! Ther cuss put er bullet inter half of ther boys an' give me er rap on ther skull thet nigh knocked me silly. Ther last I knew I was in ther thick of er free fight, an' when I come to, cussed ef I wa'n't wanderin' around in the gully yonder! I reckon, now, I went daft or some-thin' or other! Ten minutes ago I run ercross this hyar critter! It's ther worst animal I ever sot eyes on!"

"Looks oncommon like Jess James' own baste," remarked the sheriff's companion, with a keen look at the lying outlaw.

"Hanged if it don't! Snakes! Thet thar never come inter my head afore! I 'low that ther boys must er winged ther rascal arter all! Waal, I'm in ternal good luck ter hev corralled ther critter!" said Jess, promptly.

"What's this hyar?" asked the sheriff, pointing at the wrecked "schooner," while he eyed Jesse sharply.

"Exactly what I was er tryin' ter make out!" was the prompt response. "Couldn't be, now, thet thar was gypsies in it, could it? Mebbe ther road agents hez murdered ther thievin' critters! Thar ain't no love lost twixt ther two, I reckon!"

"Who be you, anyhow? I don't jest place yer, an' I 'lowed I knew ther most of ther men around the

Comstock?" asked the sheriff's companion, suddenly.

The outlaw did not so much as falter, as he answered the question.

"I'm Hank Wilkins's brother! Hank's ther cap'n at ther mine! Reckon, now, yer don't know me, sheriff, bein' as how I jest come from Pasadena last week! I 'low I wouldn't er knowed yer either 'cept I'd seen yer picter in ther rogues' gallery, down at Pasadena!"

"Ha! Ha! He's got you down fine, sheriff! I reckon ther feller's straight, all right, leastwise we've got ter take his yarn, bein' thar's no one ter dispute it!"

"Thet thar's ther situation as I see it, Jim Snyder," remarked the sheriff, grinning, "but as I'm in authority hyar I kin order ther cuss ter lead ther way! Thar's tracks yonder thet shows ther's mules makin' fur Dead Cedar, an' I 'low they was disconnected from yonder 'schooner' fer some reason or other. We'll hev er look at ther gypsies, an' then git back over ther trail ter the Broncho Hills an' investigate Hank Wilkins' brother's yarn. Ef thar's trouble come ter ther gold in this hyar section it'll mean trouble fer yours truly, I kinder reckon!"

"Thar can't no one be blamed fer trouble ef thet thar cuss, Jess James, is at ther bottom of it," began Jim Snyder, solemnly.

"Thet thar's right! Much obliged fer ther snifter, sheriff," said Jesse James, reining his horse close to the official, in order to hand back the bottle.

The sheriff returned a pistol to his belt, and reached for the bottle. This left him with the flask in one hand and his horse's bridle in the other.

His companion was exactly abreast of him, and held a weapon in his hand, but the hammer was down and the fellow's eyes were bent upon the wreck before him.

As quick as a flash Jesse James jerked two pistols from his belt, and both men were covered by the deadly muzzles.

"Hands up, gentlemen!" ordered the outlaw, coolly. "Drop that pop, Jim Snyder, and be quick

about it! Now, hands up and not a move or I'll blow the pair of you to blazes!"

The order came so suddenly that both men were caught napping, and two pairs of arms were lifted heavenward.

Jesse James debated for just a second, and then gave a second order:

"Loosen your belt and drop it, Jim Snyder, but don't lay a finger on that other weapon! It's the only chance you've got for saving your life! I'm Jesse James himself, so I reckon you'll think best not to rile me!"

A look of fear stole across Jim Snyder's face, and he promptly lowered one hand and did as he was directed. This left only one armed man, and he was practically helpless, but Jesse James put one pistol back in his belt, and then leaned forward in his saddle.

The next second the official was relieved of his weapons, and the daring outlaw was master of the situation.

"Now, gentlemen, as I seem to hold the winning hand, you'll do as I say or it will be the worse for you," began the outlaw in a cruel voice. "It's true, I stole that load of yaller this morning, but I've had the devil's own time keeping the stuff in my possession."

"Now, I propose to fix you so you won't meddle with my arrangements, and so I'm obliged to corral your horses! You see, I must get over the border before the sheriff gets after me! Ha! ha! That's a joke! Hope you appreciate it, Jim Snyder!"

"I reckon I do, Jess," said the man, slowly. "I suppose you've got it all planned what yer goin' ter do with ther sheriff!"

"I reckon I have, Jim Snyder! And the first thing is to overhaul the gypsies that have just vacated the schooner yonder! You lead the way and I'll follow, gentlemen! That may not be just to your liking, but it's the way I do business, pardners!"

The two men growled curses under their breath, but there was nothing to do but obey, and, as they

headed their horses toward the Dead Cedar section, Jesse James gave one swift glance over the landscape.

The spot where he was at present was a trifle too open for what he intended to do, but at the first deep cut between the hills, he gave a grunt of satisfaction.

Drawing the second revolver again, he brought his horse to a stop, allowing the bridle to dangle from the neck of the faithful animal.

"Halt! Get down, Jim Snyder!" he ordered.

Snyder dropped from his saddle as though he had been shot, and faced the outlaw promptly.

"Tie your horse to yonder tree and come back!" ordered Jesse James again.

Snyder complied as meekly as a school boy.

"Now, then, you do the same, sheriff!" commanded the outlaw, sternly. "It wont come easy for you to take orders, I reckon, but it'll come a hanged sight easier than having you head shot off, pardner!"

"Jess James, this hyar proceedin' is contrary ter all laws of squar' dealin'!" began the sheriff, angrily.

"Arguin' wont make me do any different! Better take what comes and be thankful, sheriff! I have no notion of killin' you if you don't kick over the traces!"

"But I'm the sheriff of this hyar county, Jess!" protested the heart-broken official.

"Ha! Ha! And I'm Jesse James, the outlaw! Reckon you don't know me, sheriff! Jesse James don't knuckle to any man, you ought to know that by this time! You're one of my sworn enemies, Dick Webster, and you're getting off lucky. I'll just ask you to tie the sheriff to one of them birches with this lariat, Jim Snyder! There! Now, I reckon I'll have to tie you myself! I've got to go on about my business, gentlemen, and you can see for yourselves that I don't want any company!"

The outlaw dropped from his saddle as he spoke, his weapon still cocked in his hand, and stood over Jim Snyder, while he bound his friend hand and foot with the lariat.

Then, with a sudden swing of his iron arm, Jesse James laid Snyder out at full length on the ground, after which it was easy work to bind his hands and feet with handkerchiefs.

Five minutes later Jesse James was galloping back to the stone house, with his two extra horses. His object was to get help before he went on after his brother.

Once in sight of the stone house the outlaw anticipated an end to his troubles; still as he neared the spot he was seized with unaccountable forebodings.

Halting at the edge of the fringe of bushes which hid the stone shanty from the trail, he put his fingers to his lips and gave three shrill whistles.

There was no reply, and the outlaw's face darkened.

He whistled again, but with the same result. Either the men were not there or they had misunderstood his signals.

Making his way through the bushes with a cocked revolver in his hand, he stumbled upon the dead body of Pete Wilcox, lying just where it had fallen.

This sight aroused all of the bad blood in his veins, but when his horse shied at a second body only a few feet further on the outlaw's blood was seething like a cauldron.

Dropping from his horse, he examined the dead man.

It was Donk Perkins. There were two bullet holes in his breast and one in his temple.

"That means there's danger near," muttered the outlaw, anxiously. "Curse the sleuths! They've tricked me by not going on with the schooner!"

He sprang back into his saddle, and once more put his fingers to his lips, and a peculiar birdlike trill resulted.

"If mother's alive, she'll answer," he thought, with a curious sinking at his heart.

A moment later the signal was repeated by some one in the shanty. It was a muffled sound, and suggested stifling and suffocation.

For just a second the daring outlaw remained undecided. Then his love for his mother returned, and

he moved slowly toward the door, which was closed as he had left it.

He saw no trace of either Coyote Bill or Hickory Dennis, his other two men, and this fact increased his suspicions of treachery among his own numbers.

What had occurred could not be guessed, so he grasped the latch of the door and shook it.

To his amazement, it opened readily, and showed him a perfectly empty room.

Neither his prisoners or his guests were visible, and for once the bold outlaw was in danger of losing his nerve completely.

CHAPTER CXXXV.

TREACHERY AMONG THE OUTLAWS.

There were only two rooms in the stone house, but Jesse James would not leave his horses to examine the second one.

Springing back into the saddle, he made a dash through the bushes, leaving his mother to whatever fate had fallen her.

He had almost reached the trail when a revolver cracked and the bridle strap in his hand was cut by a bullet.

This made the outlaw desperate.

He wheeled in his saddle, letting go his hold on the second strap, and was just in time to see Coyote Bill's head disappear behind a tree trunk.

"They've turned on me, curse them!" roared the outlaw, as he sent a bullet crashing into the tree.

Crack!

Crack!

Two more rifles spoke from opposite directions, and Jesse James, thinking that his men had joined forces with the detectives, put spurs to his horse and disappeared like a cyclone.

"Scared him off, by thunder, an' corralled their horses!" yelled Watson, as he made a dash for one of the animals. "I reckon it's safe to look around, Hickory, now that Jess has been hyar! Ef thar

was any more sleuths erbout, ther cap'n would hev heerd from 'em!"

"I 'low he got inside," remarked Hickory Dennis, as he leaped into the saddle of the second horse. "Now, the question is, shall we hev a try fer thet thar gold?"

"Not on yer life! Ther old woman's in thar, an' I'd as soon face er panther!"

"I reckon they've killed her! We heerd shots inside!"

"Thet thar makes it wuss! It means thar's enemies in yonder! Thar's ther Hon'rable Conway Tupham, ef thet thar's what he calls himself——"

"I 'low he's er sleuth, Bill!"

"My openyun egzactly! Thet thar makes two of ther rascals, not countin' ther gal!"

"Fifty thousand would be er good haul! I hate ter leave it behind me!"

"So do I. S'pose we hev er look inter ther place! Keep yer eye peeled, Hickory!"

The two approached the house, each carrying a cocked revolver, and keeping one eye behind them for fear of Jess returning.

Pushing open the door, Hickory Dennis took a step into the room. The next second he received a blow on the head from some one who was crouching behind the door, and fell sprawling across the stone floor.

His companion bolted like a shot and got away safely, with Frank Wallace doing his best to pepper him with bullets.

"One's a plenty, Frank! Let the other rascal go!" called Will Star, as he came out of the inner room, with his wife behind him.

Wallace barred the door, while Star relieved Hickory Dennis of his belt and revolvers.

"I fancy the game is in our hands just at present," went on Star, who was a handsome young fellow, with eyes as sharp as an eagle's.

"It is until Jess comes back," was the other detective's answer. "It was dead easy to trick the old lady and get possession of the shanty, but with Jess outside, we can still expect trouble! I'm glad the

other rascal is safe! Davis will look out for Frank James, I reckon!"

Hickory Dennis was scrambling to his feet, when he saw Star's weapon aimed at his heart, and he sat down upon the floor again, staring blankly at his captors.

Wallace laughed, and at that minute another figure emerged from the inner room, and Mrs. Star went at once and put her arm around her. It was another young woman, possibly seventeen years of age, whose face was quite as beautiful as Mrs. Star's, only that now her eyes were red with weeping.

"How will I ever thank you for rescuing me?" she began, with her eyes upon Frank Wallace's face. "I had given up hope until I heard his voice outside here! Oh, we must leave this place at once before that ruffian returns to murder us!"

"Is our prisoner safe?" asked Star, going to the door, and glancing in. A harsh laugh from the outlaw's old mother answered him.

She was sitting upon a stool, with her strong hands bound together.

"It seems a pity to keep her tied, doesn't it?" asked Mrs. Star, as she moved close to her husband.

This left the young girl alone, and Wallace shifted his weapon to his left hand and put his right arm around her.

"Tell me how you came here, little one," he said, in a low voice. "You certainly do not belong in an outlaw's family!"

"I do not, indeed!" was the answer, as the young girl's eyes filled with tears. "I was lured here by a monster whom I know now to be Jesse James! He told me I would find a fortune in California, where he is going with all the money he has stolen! He promised me his mother's protection, and I accepted and came! Now, I know it was all done in the hope of getting a ransom! I am the only daughter of a St. Louis merchant!"

Frank Wallace jumped as though he had been shot.

"Is your father's name Bogart, and is he the head of the firm of Bogart & Day?" he asked.

The girl nodded her head, and her eyes were riveted upon his face.

She felt sure that she was about to hear some good news of her father.

"Poor child!" said the detective, finally; "so that is what became of you, was it? The papers reported that you had ran away with a gambler, and your father has sworn that he will never forgive you!"

The young girl burst into tears.

"Don't cry, little one," said Wallace. "You are not the first girl who has been a trifle foolish! We have saved you from Jesse James, and I shall take you back to your father."

"Now, then, I guess, I've got this fellow trained," said Star, after a short conversation with Hickory. He says the gold is hidden under this floor, and if we'll divide it in three parts he'll help us save it! There's a chance for two detectives to prove their mettle!"

"It's tempting, old man, but I'm not a robber!" laughed Wallace. "Glad to know where the boodle is, so we can notify the sheriff!"

"Hark! He's coming back!" cried Mrs. Star at that minute.

The sound of horse's hoofs could be heard outside; then came a peculiar birdlike whistle. It was instantly answered by Mrs. Samuels, and both of the detectives held their breath to listen.

"They're in there, Jess!" they heard some one call, hoarsely. "They put er bullet inter Donk, all right, an' they've trapped Hickory in ther shanty! Use ter try ter fire ther house now, is thar?"

"No; besides, my mother is in there!" came the answer in the outlaw's voice. "Wait, Bill! I know a trick or two about that old pile of stones, tho'! I'll move the roof on their heads as soon as I've rescued her!"

The detectives stared at each other, while the two young women turned pale.

They were caught like rats in a trap.

Apparently nothing could save them except the presence of Mrs. Samuels.

"Bring her out here, Frank! I want to be sure of her!" said Star, who was watching Hickory Dennis.

Wallace went inside for the old woman, and Hickory Dennis made a quick movement with his foot. Star had glanced at his wife for a second, and on looking back he saw what had happened. One of the biggest stones in the floor had moved a little.

It was in just the position to show him that it was swung on a pivot.

"Hold on, there! We don't want any disappearing acts!" warned the detective, coolly. "When we want that boodle we'll know where to find it!"

Mrs. Samuels came out just then, and gave a quick glance around, her eyes meeting those of Hickory Dennis for just a second.

In an instant the old creature made a pretense of stumbling.

As she fell she struck Star's arm, sending his weapon spinning.

The detective made a grab for it, while Wallace darted toward Mrs. Samuels, and Hickory Dennis dropped like a stone down through what was now a wide opening.

"Quick! After him, Wallace! Pepper the rascal!" yelled Star, as he fired a shot downward, just as the heavy stone was closing.

"Thunder! The game is up! The fellow will get out!" cried Star, alarmed. Mrs. Samuels gave vent to a harsh, cackling laugh, as she recovered her balance with surprising alacrity.

"Look out for her, Star! She's planning to do that very same trick," said Wallace, frowning. "It's safer in the cellar than it is here, I reckon; so if she goes down we must all be ready to follow her!"

He kicked the stone as he spoke, and instantly it moved a little.

Then came the crack of a revolver somewhere below them.

"Hark! They've met, and don't know each other!" whispered Star.

Even Mrs. Samuels seemed concerned, and bent her stately head to listen.

"Hello! What ther devil ails yer, Bill?" asked Hickory Dennis in a smothered, husky voice. "Ain't it bad enough ter be hyar without yer pepperin' me, pardner? Cuss ther sleuths! They've hed me bagged! I 'lowed I'd never git clear on 'em!"

"How many air there, pard?"

"Two men an' two women! Thet thar's countin' ther gal Jess stole back in St. Louis."

"How erbout ther old woman?"

"She's tied hand an' foot by now, I reckon! What's Jess up ter, pard? I 'lowed he'd murdered ye by this time."

"I reckon he thinks 'twas ther sleuths that stole ther horses, cuss him! He ain't said a word sence I met him sneakin' back thro' ther bushes! Ther cap'n is all upset over ther old woman up yonder!"

"What's yer orders hyar, then, Bill?"

"Ter stick my head up thro' ther hole an' git er bullet in it," answered the outlaw, with a chuckle. "Jess is gin' ter storm ther chimney, while I blaze from the cellar! Ef thet thar don't fetch ther rascals, down comes ther shanty! I reckon he'd see his mother smashed as flat as er flounder if——"

Mrs. Samuels had heard enough, and gave a shriek of terror.

"Never! Never! My son would never do that!"

Her agonized cry was cut short by a crash, and an avalanche of stones was hurled down the wide-mouthed chimney.

"The rascal means business! We've got to get out of here!" cried Wallace, as he noticed that the walls were shaking.

"The place is older than the hills, and will fall like a card house," muttered Star. "We must think fast, old man! We've got to save the ladies!"

"I won't go a step without you, darling," said Mrs. Star, promptly.

"And I won't go without him!" cried Lucie Bogart, shyly, as she glanced at Frank Wallace.

The detective put his arm around her, and kissed

her gently, just as another shower of stones came rattling down the chimney.

"Hush!" whispered Star, as a shrill whistle sounded on the roof.

The others waited in breathless silence, with their eyes fixed upon Mrs. Samuels.

"She understands the signal! Why the deuce didn't she answer?" whispered Star, after a minute.

Once more the whistle sounded, but still there was no reply; then Mrs. Samuels defied their weapons by moving across the stone floor, and, bending low over the gaping hole. "Quick! Answer him, Bill Watson, or my life will be on your hands!" she called out shrilly. "You know the signal well enough! Jess wants to know if you have saved his mother!"

There was still no reply, and the old woman's face grew ashen.

Then she puckered up her lips and tried to imitate the whistle, but the breath would not come; she was too near paralyzed with horror.

"Our doom is sealed! We must bolt for it or be crushed under the stones!" cried Star, as he glanced up and saw the roof of the old house beginning to tumble.

"We must save her, too, Will! I can't see her die!" cried Mrs. Star, clasping her hands together.

"She must take her chances! You come first, sweetheart!" was the answer, as Star swung open the door and clasped his wife to his bosom. "Now bolt for it, Will!" yelled Wallace, as he caught Lucie in his arms and made a dash through the doorway.

Star tried to follow, but something got between them, and Mrs. Samuels darted out of the door like a flash of lightning.

Star was close on her heels, and as he jumped the threshold there was a crash behind him.

Without looking behind, the two detectives made a dash for the high bushes, with a din in their ears that was absolutely terrific. Then came the unmistakable sound of pistols snapping and crackling, and Star dropped his wife behind a tree and glanced over his shoulder.

"My God! The shanty is down! There's nothing left but a heap of stones!" he cried, excitedly.

"And Jess is fighting his own men! They were fighting with a specie bag! Thank Heaven, that gives us our chance to get away! There are three horses yonder! After them, Wallace!"

The shots were kept up, but the cloud of dust around the ruins kept them from seeing the combatants for more than a brief second.

Star made a leap toward the nearest horse, but found that he had been tethered too securely for him to untie easily, so he secured the second and hurried back to the ladies.

Wallace was there before him, and in a second they were in the saddles.

The last they heard was a shrill yell from Mrs. Duels warning Jess of their departure.

CHAPTER CXXXVI.

THE BATTLE AT THE RUINS.

When the two detectives returned to the heap of stones, which they did two days later, they had Lawrence Davis, a third detective, and the sheriff of Marion County with them. Davis had landed Frank James safely in jail, and then visited the sheriff's office, finding that this important official had been missing since morning.

An hour later he arrived at his office in Orrville, with his thrilling story of his encounter with Jesse James upon his lips.

He had managed to free himself from his bonds, which he liberated his man, and the two had been brought into Orrville by a band of prospectors who happened to pass over the trail to Dead

Ends told his story of entrapping Frank James, that was merely a demonstration of the quickest pull the trigger; then the two men set out with a purpose to look for Jesse and the treasure.

From the sheriff's office they encountered Wallace, with the ladies before them on

the saddle, and, leaving the fair ones safely housed at Orrville, they went back to the ruins.

"Keep yer eyes peeled, men!" murmured the sheriff, who felt pretty well acquainted with Jesse James' tricks. "Ef thar's a bag of gold left yonder under that pile of stones, I 'low Jess'll be summers about hyar er lookin' arter it!"

Star reined his horse around the pile and gave a shout of surprise.

"It's Bill Watson. Dead as a doornail!" he cried, after a glimpse at a dead body wedged in between two stones. "An' thar's er bag of the yaller at his feet! I 'low Jess shot him down!" called another of the posse.

"Caught him plumb in the act, no doubt! They were planning to steal the gold all right, and evidently Jess guessed it," added Star, with some satisfaction; "I fancy we owe those fellows our lives, in a way! If they hadn't been treacherous to Jess we wouldn't have gotten away so easily. The bullets that were meant for us had to go in their direction."

"It's ther only bag in sight," muttered the sheriff, as he searched the ruins; "I 'low now it holds erbout five thousand wuth o' dust. Reckon, as ther sheriff of this hyar county, I'd better put it on their saddle!"

He glanced around at his party, who were all behind him, and for just a second nobody answered.

Then a voice from the opposite side of the ruins came over to them all like the blast of a bugle.

"I reckon you'll keep your hands off of that bag, Sheriff Webster!"

Like magic a dozen horsemen emerged from the fringe of trees behind the pile of stones and lined themselves up as if for battle.

"It's Jesse James!" cried Star, who had recognized the voice instantly; "make ready, men! Don't let one of the devils escape you!"

The two parties were nearly even, there being one more in the sheriff's posse than in the outlaw gang, and for a moment they glanced at each other

through the crevices between the stones of the pile between them.

It was to be a singular battle, and every one knew it.

Jesse James was fighting for revenge rather than the bag of gold dust, while the detectives were trying to kill the outlaw to satisfy the government.

Almost involuntarily each rider drew closer behind the stones, which only rose high enough to protect the horses. Every man among the outlaws had his hand upon his pistol, and every member of the sheriff's posse was in the same position.

Honors and favors alike were even. It would be a fair fight, and a survival of the fittest.

The moment of angry glaring passed, and then Jesse James issued an order.

It was intended for his enemies, as well as for his followers.

"Let it be a square and fair fight, pardners! I'm the captain on this side, and my men will obey my orders! Now, then, let me see who is to have the honor of opposing me!"

The outlaw's old air of bravado had returned to him, and instantly Star urged his horse in front of the bandit king, and answered him fearlessly.

"I will command this side, Jesse James! You know me, I reckon! I am Will Star, a Pinkerton detective, who has sworn to kill you!"

"Ha! Ha! Yes, I know you! A plucky fellow, but a foolish one! This is your last day and hour on the track of Jesse James! Are you ready? One! Two!"

He raised his weapon as he spoke, and the brave detective did likewise; then both pronounced the next number together.

"Three!"

"Fire!"

A volley followed that echoed to the mountains.

"Once more!"

"Fire!"

Star roared the second order, and his men responded, but the response from the other side was extraordinarily feeble.

"They're weakening! At 'em again, boys!" yelled Wallace, excitedly.

The uninjured members of the posse raised their weapons to their shoulders, but not a hammer fell. Instead there came a blinding flash, and the monstrous pile of stones flew in all directions.

"Treachery! Shoot ther knave! Jesse James has tricked us!" yelled the sheriff, as his horse dropped under him.

Star landed on a clump of bushes forty feet away, but he was on his feet in a second, racing straight toward the scattered posse.

"Once more, boys! Let 'em have one more!" he cried at the top of his voice; then, catching sight of Jesse James through the smoke and dust, he emptied his weapon at the outlaw.

After that a sickening pain overtook him, and the brave fellow dropped on the ground.

The last sound in his ears was the crack of his own weapon.

Two hours later the brave fellow awoke to consciousness, with the sheriff and his two chums bending over him, and Davis promptly told him the result of the contest.

"We're not in it, Star! Jess had the devil on his side! He's gone scot free and taken the last bag with him!"

"An' we've lost four men; curse ther rascal!" growled the sheriff. "Snakes an' crocodiles! I hope ther sinner has made tracks outer Dayton County! I 'low, now, fer cussedness Jess James will never be equalled!"

"We killed three of his men, that's all," said Wal-

lace, dubiously, "but some of 'em were badly battered by the stones, and we winged nearly all of them."

"Then, he's escaped us! We've had all our trouble for nothing," began Star, faintly.

Wallace nodded his head, but Davis looked up from a bullet hole in his hand and said nervily:

"We'll bag him next time, old man! Never say die! He's got to die some time, you know, and it may be our luck to kill him! I reckon the thing to do now is to rest a little."

His advice was taken, and the party wended its way back to Oreville, after burying their friends in the cellar of the stone house, which had been swept almost clean by the force of the explosion.

Jesse James was not heard of again for some time, and, although several posses were sent out, the outlaw's whereabouts was not discovered. He had succeeded in getting away with the fifty thousand dollars.

Wallace kept his word later, and took Lucie back to her father, and, as she was deeply repentant, she was finally forgiven.

She did not marry her rescuer, though, until two years later, her parents insisting upon her finishing her education.

The story of her abduction by Jesse James created a nine days' wonder, and added another black mark to the famous bandit's reputation.

The injured guards were picked up and taken back to Carson City in time to save all their lives, but the Price gang vanished as if by magic.

An hour after their scrimmage with Jesse James they had buried their dead in the bushes, and then crept away to their haunts in the mountains.

Besides antagonizing all Nevada by his evil deeds, Jesse had made another enemy.

Neither Bill Price nor his men would ever forget the debt they owed him.

Some time in the future they intended to cancel it, but if Jesse had heard their threats, he would probably have shrugged his shoulders.

The famous outlaw's faith in his own ability was as great as it was justifiable.

TO BE CONTINUED.

EDITORIAL.

Our readers have noticed that from No. 21 we have used the same general title for this series, which will be continued for about thirteen issues, when a new title will be used for another series of "Jesse James" stories equally absorbing; and this plan will be continued indefinitely. We believe our readers will welcome this change as an improvement, since we can thus avoid any duplicates in titles or the use of any title bearing a similarity to others. Of course each issue will be numbered differently in rotation, as heretofore, and also bear upon its cover a different picture illustrating some important incident in the story which clearly distinguishes one issue from another.

The stories are really issued in the same manner as heretofore, except that one title is used for a number of them.

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THE DEEDS OF FAMOUS MEN!

Boys, the **PRIZE CHARACTER CONTEST** has just ended. Its success has been simply great. The entries have poured in upon us by the hundreds. *And they're still coming.* The entry list swelled up to many thousands. There were but twenty-two prizes, so everybody could not win one. Would you like to know who won the prizes? **WATCH THIS SPACE FOR THE WINNERS' NAMES.** They will all be published here, just as soon as the judges can examine the stories. This will necessarily take two or three weeks.

So successful was that Contest that the new one will be conducted on the same lines.

VALUABLE PRIZES FOR THE BEST ARTICLES ABOUT FAMOUS MEN!

HERE IS THE PLAN:

Look up what interesting facts you can about any famous American—living or dead.

Chose anybody you please—Washington or Lincoln, Paul Revere or General Grant, "Bob" Evans or Admiral Sampson, or anybody else you want to write about. Then sit down and write an article about him. Tell all about him, the brave deeds he did, or the famous words he uttered, etc.

All of the best articles will be published during the progress of the contest in a special department of the **Jesse James Weekly**.

No contribution must be longer than 500 words.



REMEMBER:

Whether your contribution wins a prize or not, it stands a good chance of being published, together with the name of the writer.

To become a contestant for the prizes you must cut out the **Character Contest Coupon**, printed herewith. Fill it out properly, and send it to **Jesse James Weekly**, care of Street & Smith, 238 William Street, New York City, together with your article. No contribution will be considered that does not have this coupon accompanying it.



**THIS CONTEST CLOSSES
FEBRUARY 1, 1902.**

HERE ARE THE PRIZES:

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The five who send us the next best articles will each receive a "Sterling" Magic Lantern Outfit, together with 72 admission tickets and a large show bill. Each lantern is 10 inches high, 4 inches in diameter, with a 1 1-2 inch plano-complex condensing lens and a 3-4 inch double complex objective lens. Uses kerosene oil only.

The five who send us the next best articles will each receive a Handsome Pearl-Handled Knife. These knives have each four blades of the best English steel, hardened and tempered. The handle is pearl, the lining brass, and the bolsters German silver.

For ten next best descriptions, ten sets of the latest and most entertaining Puzzles and Novelties on the market, numbering three puzzles each, including Uncle Isaac's Pawnshop Puzzle; the Magic Marble Puzzle, and the Demon Outfit.

COUPON.

"JESSE JAMES WEEKLY" CHARACTER CONTEST No. 2.

Date.....1901

Name.....

City or Town.....

State.....

ABOUT FAMOUS MEN.

Boys, do you see the announcement of the new Contest on the opposite page?

It's going to be a rattler, like the one that has just closed.

Everybody is to have another try at the valuable prizes offered. Don't miss this opportunity, but send in your article at once.

Following are some of the best articles received during the week.

Read them, and then send in your own!

The Life of John Paul Jones.

(By Edward W. Everson, Providence, R. I.)

One of the most famous naval commanders of the United States was Paul Jones. Paul Jones was born in Kirbean, England, July 6, 1747. He was the son of a gardener named John Paul, but after being engaged as a sailor in the slave trade, he settled in Virginia, taking the name of Jones. He became an earnest advocate of the cause of the American colonies; and when Congress, in 1775, fitted out a naval force, he offered his services. He was given command of a ship of eighteen guns, and sailing to the British coast, he performed some most daring exploits, challenging England's right to call herself "Mistress of the Seas."

When in 1777 the Stars and Stripes were adopted as the national banner he was the first to give the new flag to the breeze on board his vessel the *Ranger*.

The newly adopted flag was made an object of terror on the English and Scottish coast by the fearless commander.

His most famous engagement was fought off Flamborough Head. The result of this most desperate and bloody encounter was the capture of two British men-of-war. For this victory Congress voted him a gold medal. He died in Paris, July 18, 1792, after doing good service as rear admiral of the Black Sea under the Russian flag in the war against Turkey.

He was a brave and courageous man.

Captain John Smith's Bravery.

(By Walter Clark, Chicago, Ill.)

I am going to write of an adventure Captain John Smith had with the Indians in Virginia. He was out with a party of friends once visiting the different Indian tribes.

Passing along from place to place, Smith found himself at the residence of his old acquaintance, Opechancanough. This chieftain was generally called the brother of Powhatan. He received the captain with

much friendliness, and made feasts for his party that consumed several days. Then a time was appointed for trading; and all the Indians, far and near, were summoned to attend upon the important transaction. On the morning agreed upon, Smith took a dozen or fifteen men with him, and went from the boats to the village. It was entirely deserted. There was nothing left, either within or without the settlement. This greatly surprised Captain Smith, who expected to find the place alive with preparations for business. But soon Opechancanough came in sight, accompanied by a few chosen warriors. He brought little or no provisions with him, and his men were well armed with bows and arrows. This looked like anything but a disposition for peaceful trade, and Smith at once opened on the chieftain in words that had no very honeyed accent.

"You have deceived us," said he, in effect, "and the love you have professed is nothing but baseness and falsehood. Last year you filled our boats; now you are willing to let us starve. You know that we are in want, and I know that you have a plenty. In some way or other, I must have a part of what you have got. You are a king, and I expect you to keep your word faithfully. Here are my articles of trade; let me see your grain in exchange for them."

The Indian was at once whipped into compliance with Smith's demand, and gave up what corn he could then command, at fair rates of compensation. Next day it was promised there should be larger supplies on hand. So the next day Smith was punctual to the hour appointed. He saw at first only a few baskets of corn, but no one who looked like the Indian king. Presently, however, the latter made his appearance. He was very stiff in his manner, and showed little feeling in his expressions of friendship and kindness. He kept telling, too, how much trouble it had given him to collect what grain he had. But while he was speaking the hut was surrounded by a large crowd of Indians, numbering five hundred and over!

All the rest of the party were frightened beyond description. But Smith remained surprisingly collected.

and calm. He delivered to his handful of followers an off-hand speech, that was a very model of bravery and courage, and told them to look to him and to their own valor for a safe deliverance. Opechancanough stood by, not a little terrified at the shape matters appeared to be taking. Smith turned shortly round upon him, and spoke thus:

"Opechancanough, I see your plan to murder me; but I fear it not. As yet, your men and mine have done no harm, but by our direction. Take, therefore, your weapons. You see mine. My body shall be as naked as yours. The island in your river shall be a fit place, if you be contented. There let us two fight it out, and the survivor shall be lord and master over all our men. Let your men bring, each of them, a basket of corn, against all of which I will stake the value in copper, and the conqueror shall take the whole."

It is not to be concluded that a person, who would stealthily take advantage of another to murder him, would have the manly courage to accept so equal a challenge as that. The Indian chieftain did not. Yet he was quite unwilling that Smith should think him his enemy, and seemed hurt that he should entertain such a cruel suspicion. To try and set the matter at rest, therefore, he asked Captain Smith to go into a hut, close by, with him, saying that he had there a valuable present for him. Smith's eyes were open wide enough, and he refused to go. He saw the many savages that were lying in wait, with their drawn bows, for his destruction, and felt sure that he had already penetrated to the very heart of his danger. The Indian would not listen to his proposal that the others of his company should go for the present, insisting that no one but their leader would satisfy him.

The action of John Smith was immediate and decisive. Seizing the rascally savage by the long scalp lock that crowned his head, he pulled him forth like a timid sheep from the midst of his warriors, helpless and unresisting, and presented a pistol to his naked breast, prepared to put a hasty termination to his existence. So suddenly was the thing done that the whole crowd of Indians were struck dumb with astonishment.

The result of this bold act was seen everywhere in a moment. All came obediently to the commanding hand of our hero, and threw their weapons away without a further thought of fear or of defense. The chieftain himself gave in his adherence to the power of his conqueror, and that, too, without reservation or any splitting of words. And, with his hand still tightly grasping the hair of his giant enemy, Smith turned round and made a very pointed speech to the crowds of redskins that looked on with such a strange confusion of emotions. Among the many other things which he took oc-

casional to speak about, he remarked to them, "You promised to freight my ship ere I departed; and so you shall, or I will load her with your dead carcasses!"

That was the last of the attempt to kill Smith, and he went back to the settlements in safe

General U. S. Grant.

(By Charles Rosenbaum, New York City.)

"People think of Lincoln as the savior of the Union, but they forget to think of Grant as the savior of America.

It will take centuries before the Republic of America will learn to honor him for the good he did for them. If there had not been a General Grant it is likely that there would be no United States, no Mexico, no republics in Central America, and no republics in South America.

If a prophet had said to Mrs. Grant, "Your son shall be a great soldier; your son shall rescue the American republics from European nations; your son shall travel around the world and be received like a king; your son shall be the eighteenth President of the United States," he would have been called a raving madman. But such is the case, the world knows it.

When the war began, Grant was a colonel. He was made general. His great career really began when he was made a general.

At the battle of Petersburg while the cannons were playing, he seated himself behind a bush and began writing telegrams to his officers. That goes to show how little he feared danger.

Grant and the Siege of Vicksburg.

(By Jesse J. Barmore, Verona, N. J.)

I think that Grant was one of the best, noblest and bravest generals America has ever had.

Grant was born at Point Pleasant, a small village on the Ohio River. His father was a tanner and wanted his son to follow that trade, but he said that he would until he became of age, but not another day.

When he wanted to go to school his father obtained a nomination to the military academy at West Point, where he studied so hard that out of a class of eighty-nine only thirty-nine were graduated, and he was twenty-first.

Grant joined the army in 1845 at the time of the Mexican war, but as he saw that he could not be advanced he gave up and retired to his home.

After leaving the army he went in business with his father, but while in business he heard of the bombardment of Fort Sumter and that Lincoln wanted volunteers. He set out to drill a company at Galena, and was

elected captain, but as another man wanted it he would not take it. When Grant first wrote letters to the army he was at first not admitted, but after a while he was sent for and as he could answer all the questions asked he was given the place as adjutant general.

When Grant found how Vicksburg was fortified he sent word to the general-in-chief asking if he might attack Vicksburg, and word was sent back to attack it and capture it if possible. He got the largest army together that he could and proceeded to bombard it. Constantly and earnestly supported by Sherman, he battered against this strong fortress for six months, but without success.

With the written protest of four of his ablest generals in his pocket, Grant moved his army to a point four miles below Grand Gulf, fought several battles on his way and came to the rear of Vicksburg. Following up his regular siege operations, Grant exercised his will against those tremendous defenses, and Vicksburg fell. The news of the surrender was spread all over the loyal nation with that of the great victory of Gettysburg.

The news of the victorious general was again upon the lips of all the people. Grant became the idol of the loyal nation, but he bore his honors meekly.

Grant was asked to write a history of his military life, but at first he refused to do it, but later on he wrote it, and four days after it was completed he died at Mt. McGregor, and was buried at Riverside Park, New York, where a large tomb has been erected to his memory.

Arnold, the Traitor.

(By Lloyd Cramer, Jr., New York City.)

A traitor is one who betrays his country or cause, for the sake of gain of money, or rank, and such was Benedict Arnold. He was living in Philadelphia, while recovering from the wounds he received before Quebec and Saratoga.

There he married a Tory lady and lived away beyond his means.

The Pennsylvania authorities complained of his conduct to Congress, and they sentenced him to be reprimanded by General Washington.

Washington performed this task as gently as possible, remembering Arnold's past services and bravery, but Arnold's pride was hurt, and he resolved to betray his country.

Obtaining command of West Point, he at once entered in correspondence with the British general, Clinton, at New York. This was in August, 1780. Major John Andre was the one who carried Arnold's correspondence to Clinton. Andre was a British officer, and a noble one at that.

When all correspondence was finished Andre went up the Hudson, in the gunboat Vulture on September 22, Arnold meeting him at Haverstraw. Here they made the final agreements for the surrender of West Point to the British. Meanwhile the Vulture had dropped down the river by an accident, and so Andre (or John Anderson, for that was the *nom de plume* he went under) had to cross the river and continue down on that side.

On the outskirts of Tarrytown, as he was riding along, three men jumped out of some shrubbery and grasped his horse's bridle. They searched him and found the plans of surrender in his boot. Then he wanted to bribe them, but the true patriots could not be bought. Arnold escaped and received £10,000, and a colonel's commission in the British army. Andre was tried and convicted of being a spy, and as such was hanged at Tappan, on the morning of October 2, 1780. The patriots Paulding, Van Wart and Williams received a silver medal and \$200 a year for life.

Arnold, after the war fled to England and died in disgrace.

The Hero of Shiloh.

(By Marvin C. Brownson, Idaho Springs, Col.)

Conspicuous among the heroes of Shiloh's bitterly-contested field was Brigadier-General Thomas W. Sweeney, whose coolness, bravery and marvelous escapes were the talk of the whole army. This officer, who had lost one arm in Mexico, received a minie bullet in the remaining arm, and another in his foot, while his horse fell, pierced by no less than seven bullets. Almost fainting from loss of blood, he was lifted upon another horse, and remained on the field all day. During the progress of the battle, General Sweeney was at one time unable to determine whether a battery, whose men were dressed in blue, were Union or Confederate.

Leaving his command, he rode at an easy gallop straight at the battery in question, and when within a hundred yards he saw that it was manned by Confederates. Wheeling his horse in a half circle, Sweeney rode back at the same easy pace. Not a single shot was fired at him during this performance, so much was the respect of the Confederates excited by the daring act.

Watch for announcement of prize winners in recent contest. Their names will appear in No. 33.

Hunting and Trapping Department.

This department is brimful of information and ideas of interest to the young trapper and hunter. Write us if you have any questions to ask concerning these subjects, and they will be answered in a special column. Address all communications to the "Hunting and Trapping Department."

How to Skin, Stuff and Mount a Squirrel.

Many of our young trappers are undoubtedly catching animals that they would like to mount, and for these reasons we are going to tell them how to do it.

Although the following directions apply particularly to the mounting of squirrels, still the same instructions apply in the main to any other animal. The young taxidermist requires very few tools, and, with an ordinary sharp penknife and a pair of scissors, it is possible to accomplish the skinning just as well as if a ten dollar set of tools were used.

Before attempting to skin a squirrel or any other small animal, the young taxidermist must first of all make a note of the measurements of the animal. The reason for this is because the skin may be stretched or drawn out of shape in the skinning process, and when the stuffing is commenced the stuffer will fail to remember the former appearance of the animal, and probably make a hash of the whole thing.

As soon as the animal has been measured, and the measurements noted down on a piece of paper for future reference, the body should be placed on its back upon a clean board, with the head turned toward you. Then a slight incision should be made between the forelegs with the point of the knife, the cut being continued in a straight line close to the vent. Be very careful, especially when cutting near the ribs, that the knife does not enter too deep and cause the bowels to protrude.

When the cut has been completed, proceed to separate the skin on each side, being careful not to stretch it. Sprinkle plenty of meal or plaster of Paris on the flesh and inside the skin as you go along, to absorb any moisture.

When you have skinned as much as possible of the body, proceed to skin the head. Cut the ears close to the skull. Not far from the ears are the eyes, and here considerable care must be exercised or the whole skin will be spoiled. Make very tiny cuts until the skin becomes almost transparent, and the eye can be discerned beneath. Cut this skin carefully through.

Cut through the cartilage of the nose to the bone, and skin that and the lips. The cuts here must be exceedingly minute, and the lips must be skinned to their very edges. Near the upper lips, several small oval objects will be met with. These are the roots of the whiskers, and care must be taken not to cut these through or the hairs will fall out, and they are most difficult to replace.

Before removing any of the flesh on the skull, take some more exact measurements of its size and shape in several places, or, better still, draw a rough diagram, showing the swelling of the cheek, etc. Then remove the flesh, including, of course, the tongue and eyes. When this outside flesh has been removed, cut out the top of the palate with the knife, and take out the brains. Remember, the cleaner the skull, the better will the stuffed animal look when completed.

The next thing is to skin the forelegs, which must be cut at the joints first. No difficulty will be met with in skinning these until the feet are reached, and as there is no flesh round the toes, these need not be touched. When the forelegs have been skinned, remove all the flesh round the bones with the knife and dress with preservative. This preservative must also be applied all over the skin, skull, etc.

It can either be purchased at a naturalist's store in small tins, or be made up according to the following directions: Dissolve ten ounces of finely-cut white soap in warm water, add one ounce of potash; thicken with pipeclay; heat and stir well, and, when cooling, add ten ounces of arsenic. As this preparation is a deadly poison, of course the utmost care must be exercised in the use of it.

The back legs must next be skinned and dressed with preservative, and then the tail. There is no need to cut the skin of the tail. It can be skinned by holding one end firmly, and pushing the skin off as one would a glove.

The skin is now almost ready to be stuffed, with the exception of cleaning off it all the superfluous scraps of fat and meat.

Having completed the skinning process, the skin must

be turned into its right position by putting the leg bones and skull back, and the places where the flesh formerly was replaced by tow, moulded into the exact shape and size of the flesh taken away.

The skull must be carefully treated. First fill in the open spaces in it with tow, which is kept in place with wires. Then make some plaster of Paris, and quickly cover the head with this, and mould it into the proper shape (according to the measurements you made) with an ordinary knife. Some putty may then be put into the "pockets" of the lips, and round the nose, and then, as soon as the plaster is set, the whole must be forced back into the skin. The false eyes, which may be purchased for a trifle from any naturalist, may then be fixed in upon a foundation of putty.

The way to insert the eye is first of all to put a small piece of putty into each eyehole, and then fix in the artificial eye, which should not be so large as the real one. Then, when the eyes are fixed, gently pull the lids into position. Do not make the eyes too staring.

Before the skull of the squirrel is finally returned to the head, the wires round which the tow stuffing is to be placed should be prepared. Six wires will be required—four for the limbs, one long one for the body, and a thin one for the tail. See that wires are stout enough, and sharpen one end of the body and leg wires, and both ends of the tail wire, to a fine point. This may be done with a fine file.

When this has been done take the body wire and a short distance from the blunt end start winding the tow round to form the artificial body.

Continue this wrapping until the false body assumes the exact appearance of the real body.

Having finished the body wire, take one of the hind-leg wires and force the sharp end through the bottom of the foot of the squirrel, and then guide the wire up the leg, keeping the wire at the back of the bones, afterwards wrapping both bones and wire round with tow until the leg assumes a natural appearance. Treat the other hind leg in the same manner, and then the two front legs.

The next thing to do is to place the false body in the skin, the sharpened end of the body being forced up into the center of the skull. Push the sharp ends of each of the four leg wires clean up through the artificial body; then bend them over into the form of a hook and pull each one down sharply until the hooked ends fasten themselves tightly into the false body. Next the tail wire must be forced through the rear of the animal's body into the tail, and passed up through the tail, into which a little tow may previously be put if necessary. The sharpened end must be bent over into a hook, and fastened into the false body in the same manner as the legs.

The taxidermist must next obtain a couple of artificial eyes and fix them in, if he has not done so before. Then, before the body is finally sewn up it must be gone over carefully, and in any part where insufficient tow has been placed small quantities may be pushed in by means of a stuffing iron or a piece of wood.

The whole body must be gone over in this manner, each part being shaped and curved until the body of the animal looks exactly the same as it did when alive. Then the legs must be bent into their proper positions, all the projecting ends of wires, except those protruding from the bottom of the feet, cut off or turned up, and the skin sewed neatly up so that the stitches will not show when the animal is mounted.

The finished specimen may then be mounted on a suitable pedestal—a branch of a tree will do excellently. There are several methods of fixing a specimen to a pedestal; one is to bend the ends of the wires from the hind feet round the pedestal and fix them. Another way is to bore two holes in the pedestal, push the two wires through this, and clinch them on the other side.

After smoothing the fur down, and putting the specimen into shape, it is then completed.

If the young taxidermist wishes to place his work in a glass case, he can easily make one for himself by procuring a box of the requisite size, taking off the lid, lining the inside with colored paper, or some other suitable material, and fixing the specimen in this. Then a couple of beadings may be nailed on the front, and a sheet of glass puttied in, the whole of the exterior of the box being then covered with enamel or paint.

A small brass plate with a hole in it nailed on the back of the case will enable it to be hung up on a wall.

How to Keep and Breed Fancy Mice.

We have told our young trappers how to trap mice. Now we are going to tell them how to keep them.

You may be surprised when we tell you that some fancy mice are worth as much as \$5 each. Yet this is so, although it is only a very special one, such as a "lilac" or blue fawn, that will fetch this price. Novices should commence with one or two of the ordinary common white variety, and these can be obtained at prices ranging from about ten cents to a quarter each.

No hard-and-fast rule can be laid down as to the shape and size of a cage. This may be left to the choice of the fancier. Plenty of room for the tiny creatures to run about and warmth are the two essentials to be especially considered in the cage. A cage which has a large playground as well as a sleeping compartment, will make an excellent home for three or four mice. It is easily constructed from an ordinary box, such as any grocer or

confectioner will give you for the asking. First of all, the lid and one of the smaller sides must be removed, and then a piece of wood about half the width of this smaller side must be nailed or glued on inside the box near the top. Then a slightly narrower piece of wood of the same length must be nailed or glued to the bottom piece, the ledge which will be left on the bottom piece being provided so that the mice can run along it and thus descend the ladders into the playground.

Next, the top of the box which was removed previously must be split into halves lengthwise, and refixed with a pair of brass hinges, and then one of the halves must be nailed down. In the front part of this small compartment two or three round holes must be burnt or cut, so that the mice can enter the sleeping compartment.

The two small ladders communicating with the sleeping compartment and playground can easily be contrived out of strips of wood and fixed one each side of the box.

Fancy mice should be fed about twice a day—morning and evening. In the morning a little bread sopped in milk may be given, and in the evening a few oats, mixed now and again with a little canary seed. A little boiled rice, a few crumbs, and some small pieces of cooked potato may also be given now and again as a change. Never give them meat or cheese.

Mice should not be paired under four months old. The doe goes with young twelve days, and when the young are born they are quite bald and helpless. A day or two after birth the litter should be examined, and the surplus young—the weaker ones—should be destroyed, so as to insure the remainder growing up healthy and strong. For about three weeks after the young are born, while the doe is suckling them, she should be provided with extra sop, and after that time the young should be placed in a separate cage—the doe having a few weeks' rest.

It is the ambition of every young mouse fancier to possess a "blue," which is really not a blue color, but a peculiar shade of gray. Other fancy mice may be either black-and-tans, tortoiseshells, tricolors, black-and-white, white, with pink or black eyes, or blue fawn, the latter being very rare.

The rarer the color of course the more valuable the mice.

A fancy mouse should be of a good size and a nice shape: the fur should be smooth and the markings even.

Ordinary house mice, if caught very young, may be tamed, and the "shrew" mouse makes an excellent pet, causing much amusement to its owner by its squirrel-like antics in eating.

Fancy mice can be trained to perform numberless little tricks. They can be taught to race after one another, to drag miniature carriages, run up sticks, and jump from the tops through small open or paper-covered hoops, and chase each other backward and forward across a table in and out of holes made in wrinkled paper.

The Platform Snare.

This odd invention will be found to work capitally as a game trap, and the only extra requisite necessary consists of a slab or light board about seven inches wide, and a foot in length. Having selected the spot for the trap, proceed to cut a stiff switch about five feet in length, and having sharpened the larger end to a nice point, insert it firmly into the ground in a slanting direction. Next bend down the tip of the sapling, and resting one end of the board on the ground, catch the tip of the switch against the other end. A little experimenting will soon determine the right place for the board, after which two pegs should be driven in the ground at its edge to hold it against the pressure on the opposite end. This being done fasten a wire noose to the tip of the switch, after which the pen is the only thing required. This should be built of simple little twigs arranged around three sides of the board, leaving the front end open. To set the snare, lower the switch, and raising the board slightly at the back end, catch the tip of the springer behind it, afterward arranging the noose over the platform, and scattering the bait inside. If the trap has been constructed properly and set "fine" it will take but a very slight weight on the platform to lower it from its bearing, the weight of an ordinary bird being sufficient, and the springer thus released will fly forward either catching its victim by the neck or legs, as the case may be. It may sometimes be found necessary to cut a slight notch in the end of the springer to receive the board, but in every case it should be tried several times in order to be sure that it works sensitively.

CORRESPONDENCE.

A. B., Danvers, Mass.—A formula for bird lime was published in No. 27.

J. F., Denison, Tex.—We will probably publish a picture of the trap you refer to before long.

EXCHANGE COLUMN.

(Notice.—This column is free to all our readers. We cannot be responsible for transactions made through notices in this column. All offers must be strictly exchange offers, and no "for sale" advertisements, or exchanges of firearms, explosives, or dangerous or worthless articles will be printed. Address all communications for this column to "Exchange Column.")

Joseph Gonzalez, care of A. Lopez & Bro., Cigar Factory, 21st street, Tampa, Fla., will give one 5 cent boys' weekly for every 5 Pan American stamps sent to him, or two 5 cent boys' weeklies for every five Pan American stamps amounting to over 2 cents each. He will also give one cloth-bound Henty book for every 100 Pan American stamps sent to him. All letters answered. Send for list of books.

The R. V. Perine Exchange Bureau, No 7997 Jeanette St., New Orleans, La., has volumes of boys' papers, about one thousand 5 and 10 cent libraries and novels to exchange. Especially wants copies of the Shield Weekly and a few numbers of the Diamond Dick, Jr., Weekly and the Nick Carter Weekly and any numbers of the old Diamond Dick, Medal 10 cents, and New York Five Cent libraries. Send full list and receive ours.

JESSE JAMES STORIES



Jesse James.

WE were the first publishers in the world to print the famous stories of the James Boys, written by that remarkable man, W. B. Lawson, whose name is a watchword with our boys. We have had many imitators, and in order that no one shall be deceived in accepting the spurious for the real, we are now publishing the best stories of the James Boys, by Mr. Lawson, in a New Library entitled "The Jesse James Stories," one of our big five-cent weeklies, and a sure winner with the boys. A number of issues have already appeared, and these which follow will be equally good; in fact, the best of their kind in the world.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, New York.

NICK CARTER STORIES



Nick Carter.

THE best known detective in the world is Nick Carter. Stories by this noted sleuth are issued regularly in "Nick Carter Weekly" (price five cents), and all his work is written for us. It may interest the patrons and readers of the Nick Carter Series of Detective Stories to know that these famous stories will soon be produced upon the stage under unusually elaborate circumstances. Arrangements have just been completed between the publishers and Manager F. C. Whitney, to present the entire set of Nick Carter stories in dramatic form. The first play of the series will be brought out next fall.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, NEW YORK.

BUFFALO BILL STORIES

The only publication authorized by the Hon. Wm. F. Cody (Buffalo Bill).



Buffalo Bill.

WE were the publishers of the first story ever written of the famous and world-renowned Buffalo Bill, the great hero whose life has been one succession of exciting and thrilling incidents combined with great successes and accomplishments, all of which will be told in a series of grand stories which we are now placing before the American Boys. The popularity they have already obtained shows what the boys want, and is very gratifying to the publishers.

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THE celebrated Diamond Dick stories can only be found in "Diamond Dick, Jr., the Boys' Best Weekly." Diamond Dick and his son Bertie are the most unique and fascinating heroes of Western romance. The scenes, and many of the incidents, in these exciting stories are taken from real life. Diamond Dick stories are conceded to be the best stories of the West, and are all copyrighted by us. The weekly is the same size and price as this publication, with handsome illuminated cover. Price, five cents.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, New York.